

The dark hole of World Hunger

Second Edition - Study Devotional

Edited and arranged by
Dr. Harold Hazen



Dr. Lester Sumrall
foreword by Peter Sumrall

& the Christian solution

THE DARK HOLE OF
WORLD HUNGER

AND THE CHRISTIAN SOLUTION

THE 1989 CLASSIC

BY LESTER SUMRALL

EDITED AND ARRANGED FOR

DAILY STUDY
BY

DR. HAROLD HAZEN

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FORWARD FROM PETE SUMRALL

Pete Sumrall, CEO, LeSEA Global Feed the Hungry

It was November, 1987, and we were in Jerusalem. My father, Lester Sumrall, who was already asleep in his hotel room, was awakened at ten minutes before midnight. In what became a defining moment in his life and the direction of his ministry, God clearly spoke to him that he must feed His hungry children.

A few hours later I awoke to the sound of knocking on my hotel room door. It was my father. He looked a little disheveled from a sleepless night. But he was also focused and intense as he gave me his handwritten notes and told me to transcribe them.

In the past, God had spoken directly to him several times regarding the direction of our ministry while he was visiting Jerusalem. As I read and typed his notes my mind was spinning, questioning. How would this new vision fit into what we were already doing? Where would the additional finances come from? What effect will this have on our ministry and life?

After that memorable night, my dad had quite boldly stated that, "After fifty years of intense world evangelism, God put me on target in Jerusalem."

On target? I questioned again. With all we are doing how were we possibly missing the "target"?

But the Creator of the Universe spoke His Heart and Passion - that He cares for the lost, the hungry, the orphans, the widows and those who suffer. God was asking us to be His hands extended, and Dr. Lester Sumrall would once again immerse his life and energy in the Call of God.

For the remainder of his time on earth, my father would live every waking moment focused on the vision to feed the hungry, encourage the church, and evangelize the lost.

The Dark Hole of World Hunger was first published in 1989. In the ensuing years, LeSEA Global Feed the Hungry has experienced the satisfaction of joining with friends who partner together with us to change lives every single day. Just one example is our "Every Child Every Day" initiative that currently reaches over 61,000 children who receive a nourishing meal every day, education for their future, and the opportunity to know Jesus Christ. The original goal for this initiative of bringing a full life of hope to the world's 100,000 neediest children will soon be reached.

Though the specific statistics and data have changed since it's writing, the call remains. It is clear in the Scripture that there will be famines and troubles in the days ahead. Our prayer is that you, the reader, will rise up with a godly righteous commitment to join with us to feed the hungry. We believe this is the very heart and passion of God. He will come alongside those that are compassionate to the suffering. (Is. 58: 7-11).

Remember, a full life feels good!

(Signature of Pete)

PREFACE

Warning; *reading this book may impact you emotionally resulting in feelings ranging from sadness and discomfort to anger. The author is not to blame-he is only reporting true stories, Bible Scripture, and facts. (Ed. Note)*

The shame of the ongoing daily reality of global hurt, hunger and poverty is shared by every Christian and Christian church in the world who should be asking the question why this devastation still exists in a world of plenty. This book is only about political, natural or even man-made “disasters”, floods, earthquakes, hurricanes, etc., which cause sudden and extensive damage and long term problems of homelessness, hunger, poverty and sickness. Those typically do receive great worldwide attention.

But the ever-present daily monster of extreme poverty especially intensified among widows and orphans is typically thought of as a problem which exists in Africa, Asia and other faraway places. Most of us have an “out of sight-out of mind” attitude. *It's not that we don't care, we just don't think about it.* It's amazing how many of us do not even realize that as many as one in six *Americans* do not have enough food, and *20% of the children in the USA are undernourished.*

Ask yourself how many Bible verses you can cite which directly urge Christians to personally take responsibility to aid the impoverished and starving millions in our world. Most people can recall a few of the more well known but most of us cannot recite more than a half-dozen at best. Those just aren't the verses of the Bible we are taught to memorize.

Many books are published which become popular and we read them for edification and enjoyment but once read they are put away and rarely read again. But occasionally there are those books which become enduring and lasting classics which are read and re-read many times because they contain a timeless message for everyone and all time. Lester Sumrall's *The Dark Hole of World Hunger and the Christian Solution* is one such book.

Thus the Editor has undertaken to publish this volume which is the original Classic divided into actionable daily readings for study and meditation. It is much more than another textbook or documentary of a problem we already know exists, rather, it is a compendium of selected key Scripture references which every Christian should know and commit to memory for directed and intentional prayer about how God would have us respond to eradicate the devastation, disgrace, and despair of poverty, homelessness, and the vulnerability of starving men, women, and children – the lost, last and least in the world. As much as possible the authenticity of Dr. Sumrall's original thought and writing is retained and has not been changed except where minor editing was necessary for formatting and readability.

There has been no real attempt to update the original book, such as statistics or references to world events, simply because the problems and causes which the author (Dr. Lester Sumrall) discussed have not changed. One addition along this line has been added, that is, the facts at the end of each daily reading are taken from contemporary sources.

My one hope is that you will be moved with the same compassion which moved Jesus when He fed thousands of men, women, and children and said as recorded in Matthew 15:32, “...*I have compassion on the multitude, because they have continued with me three days and have nothing to eat. And I do not want to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way.*” Now picture tens of thousands of men, women, and children who have not eaten in many days and the compassion that we should have for them.

Dr. Lester Sumrall, Founder of **LeSEA Global Feed the Hungry**, recognized this problem 25 years ago and wrote the following:

“Much of the world still thinks of hunger as something “out there”. It’s distant and far removed from where they are. They can’t identify with it. And because it is so unreal to them, they do nothing about it.”

Dr. Harold Hazen
Editor

ONE

THE THREE VISIONS

“Write the vision, and make it plain...” (Habakkuk 2: 2)

In Panama City, Florida, when I was seventeen years of age I saw my *first vision*. On one side of my bed was a coffin and on the other side a Bible. Though I was in the last stages of Tuberculosis, God said He would heal me if I would preach. To this challenge I answered positively and began my ministry.

Eighteen months later at a country school house near Dyersburg, Tennessee, I saw my *second vision*. I vividly saw heathen nations go to Hell. I became so concerned that I wept all night and God said He was calling me to those nations.

It was fifty years since that second vision and I asked God why I did not see another vision. He said that the visions of my youth were to send me forth as an evangelist and later as a missionary. My *third vision* came while I was in Panama City, Florida. A dramatic vision of a River of Blood appeared to me as I was in meditation. The following night in Birmingham, Alabama I again saw this strange vision. It was while I was leading a tour group in Jerusalem, November, 1987, that God spoke to me about what this third vision meant.

God said, *“One of my greatest concerns is that My people, part of My church, do not die before I return. Will you help feed them? I say to you, hunger is an agonizing death. Give to those who are dying and you shall live happily and victoriously!”*

God spoke to me for five hours and at 5 a.m. I said, *“I am willing, Lord.”*

Call to Action: Are you ready and willing? Will you help to feed the multitudes?

Fact: 13.1 percent of the world’s population is hungry. That’s roughly 925 million people who go undernourished on a daily basis, consuming less than the recommended 2,100 calories daily. ¹

TWO

THE MESSAGE

“He shall dwell on high: his place of defense shall be the munitions of rocks: bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure.” (Isaiah 33:16)

For five hours from midnight on, God explained what He was asking me to do.

“I speak to you in Jerusalem. It is the city where I took bread and blessed it and said, “Take, eat, this is My body broken for you.” So, take bread for the spirit, soul, and body to the multitudes of the earth.

“Go especially to famine and war areas where there is devastation and hunger and feed them. Many are suffering. You will bring the food in fast by plane. You are to ride with the plane, watch the food being given out, and rejoice to see the children fed.

“Give food to refugees who require help. It is My pity upon them.

“America has the food. Buy it and take it to the hungry.

*“Use storage houses to hold the food until you are ready to distribute it to the hungry...”
The Lord said, if I bless you financially for your needs, will you operate a global feeding program for My people?*

“You will distribute the food through Pastors and churches. Around the world I want you to feed My people who are hungry.

“Don’t let My people die of starvation.

“Then you will understand the River of Blood flowing toward you is life flowing deep and wide. At times the blessing will be almost uncontrollable.

“Get ready for it!”

Call to Action: One way to be part of the Blessing is to distribute the Blessing!

Fact: The difference between hunger and malnutrition is that malnutrition means the body does not have the vitamins and nutrients necessary to grow or fight off disease. In developing countries where sanitation is poor, lack of nutrition only makes people more vulnerable to illness.²

THREE

FOOD-THE FIRST TEMPTATION

“And the devil said unto him, if thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread.” (Luke 4:3)

The big blunder with Adam and Eve began in the Garden of Eden, and it began with food. He’s been using it ever since to torment the human race. Have you ever stopped to think that it was food that Satan used to tempt Jesus?

Hunger does terrible things to people. The gnawing sensations that initially accompany hunger pangs give way to frightening and unspeakable actions: but later, when they are weakened and no longer can stand, they no longer cry out.

Certainly, one of Stan’s most devious strategies against mankind is in food deprivation.

Our present-day difficulties and suffering situations world-wide are the results of man’s sinful choices. Because of what Adam sowed, the earth has not always produced as God intended.

Because of the transgressions of our first parents, natural disasters have come upon the earth that has wreaked havoc with the soil and food production. (Genesis 3:17)

Sin brings consequences. Among other things, Adam and Eve’s disobedience brought curses to the ground. Someday there shall be “no more curses”. (Rev. 22:3)

Through the long centuries, many Christian, humanitarian, and Government organizations have sought ways to alleviate the problem of world hunger. [The End Time Joseph Program to feed the hungry of the world was the original response to God’s Vision and today is called LeSEA Global Feed the Hungry.]

I have visited and spoken in over a hundred nations and on all continents, where hunger causes terrible suffering and deprives innocent humans of life. I do not go to take dreadful pictures of malnourished babies near death from hunger or sickness, but to personally feed hungry people. Only you can answer the prayers of good men, women and children caught up in the devastation wrought by civil war, famine, drought, and other contributing causes of world hunger. Will you not gasp in horror, but rise up and feed the people who pray, “*Our Father who art in Heaven...give us our daily bread.*”

Call to Action: Assure yourself that you are responsible that at least one hungry child receives their daily bread before you do.

Fact: Of the 2.5 billion children in the world, one billion live in poverty. ³

FOUR

ABRAM AND ISAAAC

“Now there was a famine in the land, and Abram went down to Egypt to dwell there, for the famine was severe in the land.” (Genesis 12:10)

Mass starvation is not new in world history. The Bible is not silent about famines that decimated the population. Famines in history have resulted from widespread crop failures caused by frost, droughts, dust storms, floods, earthquakes, pests and all other natural disasters as well as war, political inhumanity to man in nations ruled by despots, and just plain greed.

Other less direct factors may contribute to famine. The breakdown of food distribution systems may affect regions dependent upon importation of food. Deforestation may increase the danger of floods with the subsequent loss of fertile top soil. Overpopulation in many parts of the world reduces the acreage per farm until it is barely sufficient in good years much less during lean years.

In more recent years the plight of the poor has surfaced in countries where large multi-national corporations have been pushing the poor off their meager land holdings, robbing them of their only means of raising food to feed their families. Many are government sanctioned monopolies. The first reference to famine in Scripture is found in the Old Testament when Abram left Canaan and “went down to Egypt” in today’s Bible verse. Famines were not uncommon in ancient Palestine. Genesis 26:1 tells us “*Now there was a famine in the land-besides the earlier famine of Abraham’s time...*” By this time the Lord told Isaac not to go down to Egypt, but to stay put and He would bless him.

Actually, Egypt in the Scriptures is pictured as a symbol or type of the world, and instance of dependence upon some human source apart from God (see Isaiah 31:1). As Christians, we “go down to Egypt” spiritually speaking, when we depend upon something or someone else for guidance instead of God.

Call to Action: It’s time to stop depending on government agencies to solve a problem that we as Christians should be doing.

Fact: One billion children are deprived of one or more services essential to survival and development, many by political and government intervention.⁴

FIVE

JOSEPH

“The famine was over all the face of the earth, and Joseph opened all the storehouses and sold to the Egyptians. And the famine became severe in the land of Egypt.” (Genesis 41:56)

FAMINE: A state of extreme hunger suffered by the population of a region as a result of the failure of the accustomed food supply.

The famine spoken of in the Bible verse today is perhaps one of the better known famines. It occurred at the time when Joseph was made a ruler of Egypt. The Bible tells us that this famine “ravaged the land” and was “very severe” (Genesis 41:30).

Joseph prophesied of this famine to Pharaoh as he interpreted Pharaoh’s dreams and told him what to do to prepare for this. He described the famine in words that fit what we in our lifetime have seen happen in various places throughout the world. Famine this “woefully severe”, Joseph said, leaves people destitute in their starving condition, and it exhausts, consumes and finishes the land.

Actually, it was Joseph’s provision that saved the people from much suffering. It was Joseph’s wisdom that provided a means of escape from death by starvation. And it is the Biblical account of Joseph that God used to call my attention to the need to prepare now for the years of suffering and famine that are ahead.

That famine occurs as a result of divine chastening cannot be denied. Famine occurred in David’s time and he clearly recognized it was God’s hand of judgment (2 Samuel 21:1; 1Chronicles 21:9-13).

So great was the suffering by famine that the Bible tells us in desperation the people were reduced to cannibalism, that is they ate their own sons and daughters. This was prophesied in Deuteronomy 28:53 and fulfilled in 2 Kings 6. It is a horrific story but faithfully recorded for our instruction and learning.

The siege and distress was so great that even gentle, sensitive and refined men became so desperate, and so lacking in compassion they became cruel toward their own wives and children, and resorted to eating them.

(How much this may be happening in today’s world secretly we may not nor never know. Ed. Note)

Call to Action: We can all be “Josephs” in our time.

Fact: For the 1.9 billion children from the developing world, 640 million are without shelter and 400 million are without access to safe water. ⁵

SIX

FAMINE AS PUNISHMENT

“If you wholly set your faces to enter Egypt, and go to dwell there, then it shall be that the sword which you feared shall overtake you there in the land of Egypt; the famine of which you were afraid shall follow close after you there in Egypt and there you shall die.” (Jeremiah 42:16-17)

The psalmists and the prophets spoke often of the sword and famine as coming upon the people because of their departure from seeking after the Lord. In particular, the prophet Jeremiah cried out to the people, pleading with them and warning them of impending suffering if they would not forsake their evil ways (see Jeremiah 42). They were told not to go into Egypt, but they would not heed the word of the Lord coming to them by the prophet and they died by the sword and famine (Jeremiah 44:12-29).

Jeremiah’s prophecies were fulfilled with the siege of Jerusalem and the defeat of the people. We see once again the pitiful fate of children who are always the most vulnerable when destruction and famine hit. (Lamentation 4:1-10)

The accounts of those years of suffering and famine undoubtedly filtered down from survivors to their later offspring. So when Jesus came along ministering to the human needs He encountered, when He spoke He made mention of the three and a half year drought that swept across the land and the famine that resulted during the time of Elijah (Luke 4:25).

We know that Jesus was very conscious of the physical hunger needs of the people. Two of His most amazing miracles had to do with feeding the multitude (John 6:5-14; Mark 6:35-44; Mark 8:1-9). Jesus warned that there would be famines, pestilences, wars, earthquakes and terrible disasters at the end of the age and preceding His second coming (Matthew 4; Mark 13; Luke 21:5-38).

Through all of Biblical history, it is easy to trace the hand of God correcting the oppression of the poor, allowing catastrophes, national destruction, captivity, natural disasters, and suffering at the hands of merciless rulers upon people who rebel against Him.

The call to us at this pivotal point in history is to learn the lessons from the past, and to determine with God’s help to be the kind of people He wants us to be.

Call to Action: The thousands of children who die every day from lack of food and clean water are not being punished-they are the victims.

Fact: Hunger: the uneasy or painful sensation caused by want of food; craving appetite; the want or scarcity of food in a country. One out of six children-roughly 100 million-in developing countries is underweight.⁶

SEVEN

THE BLACK HORSE OF FAMINE

“So I looked, and behold, a black horse, and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand.”
(Revelation 6:5)

FAMINE: Extreme and protracted shortage of food, causing widespread and persistent hunger, emaciation of the affected population, and a substantial increase in the death rate.

The black horse of famine has been riding across the pages of history unidentified by the vast majority of the world’s people. Few there are, even among many Christians, who recognize the reality of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse: Pestilence, War, Famine, and Death (Rev. 6:5-8). What is the meaning for us today?

Attempts have been made by researchers to classify famine according to who is affected and where the affected population is located. “General famine” affects all classes or groups within the country or region of food shortage, although not all the groups of people suffer equally. “Regional famine” is concentrated in only a part of a country, but all groups within the region are usually affected.

“Class famine”, describes a condition in which certain population groups suffer the greatest hardship in a country short of food. While the causes of famine are numerous, they are usually divided into natural and human categories and they may affect different groups of people within a country or region.

Natural or physical causes of famine destroy crops and food supply through drought, heavy rain or flooding, unseasonably cold weather, typhoons, vermin, plant disease and insect infestations. Overpopulation is a word you hear used frequently when famine is discussed. While overpopulation poses a real risk, *actually there is enough food in the world today. It’s one of the myths surrounding famine’s causes.*

Human causes of famine are primarily political and cultural. Unlike most natural disasters, they are within the bounds of human control. This, of course, is where man’s inhumanity to man enters the picture. Thousands of major historically recorded famines have plagued Asia, Europe, China, India, Alsace, Lorraine, Wales, Ireland, Rome, Greece, Egypt, Russia, America and the New World for centuries.

Call to Action: Let us resolve today to be the visible force that will not curse the darkness; rather, we’ll bring light into the lives of the starving millions.

Fact: Malnutrition is a process with consequences that may extend not only into later life, but also into future generations.⁷

EIGHT

CULTURAL FOOD SHORTAGES

“We have mortgaged our lands and vineyards and houses, that we might buy grain because of the famine. There were also those who said, “We have borrowed money for the King’s tax on our lands and vineyards.” (Nehemiah 5:1-19)

Social systems, the feudal social system of the Middle Ages being one of the worst examples, have contributed to widespread disease and famine down through the ages and continue into the 21st century. The situation described in the 5th chapter of Nehemiah paints a horrific picture of a people so tyrannically dominated by the government that families were selling their children and forcing them into slavery in order to buy food to live.

Call it by any name you wish, whether by wars, political upheavals, or the planned starvation of whole populations, cutting off the food supply is one of the cruelest schemes ever devised by Godless men. At one time news of mass deaths due to famines received very little attention, however, the “instant real time” availability of worldwide news makes such things starkly visible every day. Whether it’s Satellite television, the Internet, cellular telephone/video messaging, the world can no longer plead ignorance.

Tens of thousands of innocent men, women and children are *needlessly* starving to death every day and we know it!

History records how the pressure of population on food supplies causes more powerful groups to raid or seize the fertile valleys and plains from better-fed neighbors. Through the centuries many different peoples raided the fertile valley of the Euphrates, Nile, Danube, Rhine, Volga, Indus, Ganges, and the Yangtze. Scottish Highlanders raided the lowlands to the south: and even the Pilgrims in America, driven by hunger, raided the food supplies of the Indians. Oftentimes such events are accompanied by forced movements of people, we call them “refugees”, displaced persons uprooted from their land, homes, and countries, forced to flee for their lives. Sadly, the word “refugee” is synonymous with hunger.

We cannot say we are not aware of it, and we must not ignore it, but the truth is the “silent killer” is no longer silent and victimized peoples are being decimated by hunger and the ravages it causes.

Call to Action: Have you been convinced that we as Christians must not be silent any longer in the war on world hunger?

Fact: This year, an estimated 9 million children younger than 5 years old will die needlessly, more than half from hunger related causes.⁸

NINE

DRIVEN PEOPLE: EARTH'S HUNGRY WANDERERS

“And all the countries came to Joseph in Egypt to buy grain, because the famine was severe in all lands.” (Genesis 41:57)

No one chooses to be a refugee. Jesus was a refugee before the age of two. Herod sought to kill Him but being warned by an Angel of the Lord; Joseph took Mary and Jesus into Egypt. Of course, they did not leave due to hunger but many of the outcomes of being refugees are hunger, danger, poverty, exposure to the elements, and so on.

Dispossession-becoming hungry travelers-causes emotional suffering as well as physical. Imagine leaving behind your livelihood. Many, for instance, who became expellees in Europe during the Second World War, left behind farms that had been fruitfully cultivated for countless generations.

In the aftermath of the Second World War, an estimated forty million refugees were in the world with the most massive presence being on the European continent. In the end many perished, and the tales of horror and sadness describe a sorry episode in modern world history.

Today there are people who, not by their own choice, have no place to call home and no hope. Their lives are empty, made so by grinding poverty, pervading hunger, soul-killing boredom, and shameful dependency. Some of us have a hard time trying to sort this all out.

To bring it closer to home, try to imagine the combined population of many states in America being uprooted, (as during Hurricanes Katrina and Sandy, etc. Ed. Note), and people having to scramble over state boundaries with nothing but the clothes on their backs and a few hastily gathered meager belongings. Think about what this would do to the adjoining states where they try to settle. Mass migrations cause problems not only to those migrating, but to the countries into which they flee. All sorts of consequences are the result of dispersion in a shoulder-to-shoulder world.

Call to Action: If you have ever experienced being a refugee or know someone who has, you know how even the simplest supply of food and water brings a ray hope.

Fact: Nearly 98 percent of worldwide hunger exists in underdeveloped countries. Hunger is often passed from mother to child. 17 million children are born underweight because their mothers are malnourished.⁹

TEN

THE MAN-MADE DISASTER OF THE REFUGEE

“The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me. Because the Lord has anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound.” (Isaiah 61:1)

Nothing strikes me as being so heartbreaking as the uprooting of peoples, whole villages, entire large areas, forced to leave behind their possessions, and to set out on foot for where?

Wandering nomads becoming, as it were, a nation of the nationless. Oh, the injustice of it all!

Refugees, the uprooting of people as a causative factor of hunger. For it is so true, refugees cannot produce food.

Refugees only bring themselves and increased need to areas where food and water are already in short supply. They stagger out of the bush, wearing scraps of bark or sacking or nothing at all, arriving at overcrowded refugee camps. They tell of mass executions, razing of whole villages, forced labor, systematic rape and beatings, and starvation.

The arithmetic of the (worldwide) refugee problem is not easily figured. Refugees, distributed over a vast area of the earth's surface, are part of the world's greatest problem. Victimized by war, social unrest or political decisions, they vote for life with the only ballot left to them-their feet.

I wonder, does anyone still remember the anger and confusion that raged through one of the largest refugee camps in the world, Hong Kong, as the mainland Chinese ran from Communism? Our family lived in Hong Kong when more refugees were shot than survived. There is no question, today for the man-made refugee, life is grim and hunger is acute.

Call to Action: The problem for a refugee is indeed dark but we can send hope and it's so easily done.

Fact: While hunger exists worldwide, 62.4 percent of the hunger exists in Asia/South Pacific. ¹⁰

ELEVEN

ESCAPE

“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.” (Matthew 25:35)

Americans felt the challenge of the refugee in April 1975 when a new generation of refugees was born in Vietnam with the fall of Saigon. Thousands of Vietnamese were helicoptered out of Saigon while thousands took to the sea from Vietnam’s long coastline.

This 1975 Exodus led to the open sea. How treacherous! How sad! Escapees were saved by ships of many flags and airlifted to the United States. For many, it was the second experience of uprooting within two decades. There was a brief period when 140,000 Vietnamese were housed in Army forts throughout the United States but through a computer terminal operating at Fort Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania, relatives all over the United States were being reunited.

The United States became the country of first asylum for 300,000 uprooted people from the area known as Indo China. But we also became the refuge for Cubans and Haitians who arrived in Florida in flotillas of every type of craft from tiny fishing boats to small yachts. The Cuban influx made front page headlines, and the problems of the refugee made the evening news. In this country, when emergency situations arise of this magnitude, the government is quick to declare a “disaster area”, thus making it eligible for federal funds.

Fleeing refugees from the Phnom came to be known as the “boat people”. But as the mounting tide of these people came to receiving areas such as Singapore and Malaysia, these poorer countries found that they simply could not supply the encampments of refugees that were growing on their shorelines. Horror stories of cases of boatloads of famished people being towed out to sea abound. Many of these rickety old boats fell apart under the strain of their overload and the people drowned at sea.

Call to Action: Dr. Sumrall graphically depicts historical episodes of the flight and ultimate outcomes of deprivation, desperation, and death when forced emigration occurs. The Christian heart should be pounding with compassion.

Fact: The wealthiest nation on earth has the widest gap between rich and poor of any industrialized nation.¹¹

TWELVE

A CONTINUING REFUGEE PRESENCE

“If you spend in your selves 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 noon day.” (Isaiah 58:10)

International pipelines which had saved many thousands of earlier refugees had to be reopened. Hong Kong was forced to reopen its “DP Camps” (displaced persons camps) for close to 70,000 refugees from Vietnam. Thailand also became a country of first asylum for many Vietnamese refugees fleeing from a new regime, but also for Kampuchians, formerly Cambodians, fleeing from a “murderous utopia”. The atrocities are now legendary imposed by a few Marxist ideologues bent on forcibly overthrowing all existing social conditions. A systematic liquidation of “class enemies” was carried out. Added to the senseless killings and sufferings imposed on the innocent, were the effects of the monsoon rains that came. Along with that came sickness and hunger.

The most helpless of these refugees were the unaccompanied children who had lost their parents during the escape. Voluntary relief agencies had the monstrous task of channeling food and supplies and then helping you find places for the refugees to resettle. They dispersed to the United States, France, Canada and Australia and 30 other countries. The flexibility of voluntary agencies and religious groups was shown time after time in meeting these needs.

Call to Action: Certainly most of us have never experienced this terror in our lifetimes but "unto him who is given much, much is required".

Fact: Poverty is the main cause of hunger, and hunger is a cause of poverty. When people go malnourished, they lose brain functionality and the mental resources to be a productive asset in society or earn money. ¹²

THIRTEEN

AN ALL TOO COMMON SCENARIO

“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 him and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?” (Isaiah 58:6 7)

Think about it. How would you like it if suddenly you realized if you didn't grab what you could carry, and didn't gather your loved ones around you hurriedly explaining the need to run for your lives, that unless you did, you might be tortured to death, forced to join enemy forces, your women and little girls taken as slaves? What would that do to you?

Or how would you feel, as the male head of your household, if your wife's sisters and little girls were raped before your eyes? Then, at gun or spear point, you had to leave them behind as your captors marched you off with them and you knew you would be forced to fight and kill your fellow countrymen? As you stagger along, with one last backward glance at your loved ones in your village, you carry with you the memory of the older villagers, perhaps even your parents, being killed, the village burning, your womenfolk kidnapped, crying out for mercy, knowing they will be forced into a life of servitude. Everything has been plundered. No food has been left for them. How will they survive? What will they do? Where will they go?

This is an *all too common scene* with some variations. It's been going on for years in various places throughout the world. The survivors become people without a homeland, victims who had no control over their destiny, a casualty of man's inhumanity to man.

Call to Action: The scenes described by Dr. Sumrall 25 years ago have only worsened in today's world.

Fact: Almost 1 in every 15 children in developing countries dies from hunger. A child dies every 6 seconds.¹³

FOURTEEN

PUTTING A FACE ON THE MASS SUFFERING

“Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.” (Gal. 6:2)

We have met these people. We have been with them in their displaced condition in refugee camps. We have seen the look on their faces, the rags on their bodies, the huts and tents, and yet I have yet to hear one of them complain.

We also talked with them in the hospitals and in a Nicaraguan resistance recovery center. We saw young boys who had been wounded in battles between the Contras and Sandinistas, fighting for their freedom from the oppression.

We talked to one young man who showed us where a bullet entered through his nose, took a curve and went down into his lung. He knew it destroyed something inside and he immediately began to pray. As he prayed, he began to vomit, and vomited up the bullet. But one lung had to be removed.

A young boy, twelve years old, told us he had gone to war alongside his father. He saw his father tortured and killed by the Sandinistas, and he was wounded, but he escaped and survived. He said God had a purpose for his life.

A fine-looking nineteen-year-old with an amputated leg told me he wanted to go back. I saw many like him, missing limbs, eyes, other wounds, who had to leave families behind and didn’t know if their loved ones were alive or dead.

One of our American pastor-directors, Tennyson Fitch from Indiana, talked to a mayor of a community near the Nicaraguan border whose pastor-father had been assassinated for preaching the Gospel. “They come across the border”, he explained, “fleeing for their lives...and if it wasn’t for God’s People reaching out with a helping hand, they would be utterly lost and without hope in the world.”

Call to Action: Repression, hunger and suffering are the daily lot of millions of victims as described today. Will you be one of those who reach out and bring hope where there is no hope?

Fact: 1.4 million children die each year from lack of access to safe drinking water and adequate sanitation.¹⁴

FIFTEEN

DISEASE

“So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him.” (Luke 10:34)

War, hunger, poverty, *disease*. Their property looted, destroyed, plundered. Soap? What is that? Food? Clothing? And always there is disease. Sickness and disease. Their bodies are covered with sores. Malnutrition always exacerbates the effects of undernourishment, especially in young children. Diarrhea, dysentery, edema, worms, cholera, severe coughing, pneumonia, bronchitis, measles outbreaks.

There are no rest rooms in most refugee camps. People have been stripped of all dignity. The health hazard that is created is unbelievable. The people are often unable to control their bodily functions. Everyone is barefoot. Can you imagine what it is like, walking in human excrement, the stench overwhelming? And where do these humans sleep? Wind. Extremes of cold and/or hot. Dust. Parched ground.

Some of these victims had known creature comforts, but now they have nothing. Along with others they find themselves a part of incredible human congestion on land already crowded. The refugees know they are severely stretching health, water, and other services in countries that are already stretched, and where child mortality and malnutrition are among the highest in the world. They pour in naked and weak from such ailments as malaria, bilharzias, diarrhea, severe malnutrition and leprosy.

Typical of the effects of displacement and fleeing for one’s life is the story of a Mali herdsman who lost his cattle to drought and then his family on a grueling 200 mile trek to a refugee camp, only to find the rations had already been exhausted. They were given four minimal children’s portions. He said, “My wife and I will go without, but how can I decide which of my five children shall starve?”

Call to Action: In the final analysis, world hunger comes down to this question. Who shall starve? Who shall survive?

Fact: 2.5 billion people lack access to improved sanitation. ¹⁵

SIXTEEN

A DARK HOLE OF DEATH FOR BABIES AND CHILDREN

“But your little ones, whom you said would be victims, I will bring in, and they shall know the land which you have despised.” (Numbers 14:31)

These tiny victims of hunger and malnutrition’s related diseases are not just pictures, with their matchstick legs, distended stomachs, and soulful eyes, in attractive brochures designed to tug at your heartstrings. This is what we have seen. This is what our cameras have recorded. There is no pretty way to portray the face of suffering caused by hunger.

Women and children, especially female children, are always the first casualties of hunger. Although globally speaking more boys than girls die during their first of life, in many developing countries more baby girls than boys die because boys are given more food than their sisters, especially when there’s not enough to go around in the first place.

Women are considered biologically to be tougher than men. The explanation is set forth that nature wants to safeguard the uterus for future generations. In most developing countries, however, the culture put an end to any advantage conferred on women. For example, women do most of the work. Women in these countries work at least two-thirds of all the hours, but get only one-tenth of the income and own a mere one-hundredth of the property. In one study, the International Labor Organization identified 17 different agricultural tasks and determined that, in Africa, women did 14 of them. It is very sad and difficult to be a woman or a female child in some places on this planet.

But the boys and girls just capture my heart when we go into these countries to deliver food. I find them always to be so polite. I find myself hugging and loving them. I wanted to embrace them all. I hoped they sensed how much I love them. I told them through an interpreter that I was giving them your love too-the love of Christians around the world.

Call to Action: How many of these “little ones” will you embrace with your love today? If you cannot go there, you can send your love in the form of food, water, and clothing.

Fact: 7.6 million children worldwide died from hunger – more than 20,000 a day- in 2010. ¹⁶

SEVENTEEN

JESUS FOCUSED ON THE WORTH OF LITTLE CHILDREN

But Jesus said, "Let the little children come unto Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 19:14)

Jesus focused on the worth of little children and we had better pay attention. To allow these little ones to suffer and die because of food deprivation must be, in the eyes of the Father, an enormous injustice.

Oh, how much we need to value children! Don't allow the literature to somehow devalue them in your thinking. A brochure or an ad in a magazine may say, "It doesn't cost much to sponsor a child," or "for a few cents a day", these may be facts that are quite true, but what is of major importance is the truth that an investment in saving the lives of children is an investment for time and eternity. Our pennies and our dollars count, but we don't just tip, as it were, to appease the God of the Good Book.

These vulnerable hungry little ones with the dark circles under their eyes, dressed in rags, are little jewels that can sparkle for Jesus if given even half a chance. I want you to see them for who they actually are.

In the days of his flesh here upon earth, Jesus was no mystic as he walked and talked among men. He spoke of familiar things and entered into everyday experiences of those with whom he mingled. In so doing he made them sacred forever. Therefore, to recognize fully what Jesus was doing in not only verbally acknowledging the presence and the worth of these children, but in demonstrating his love for them, is to grasp the importance of giving more than lip service ourselves.

Jesus is our example. To do anything less than to extend ourselves on behalf of children is to fall short of doing what Jesus said we were to do. The value and potential of children are constantly enforced in the Bible. Child by child communities and countries are created.

Call to Action: Do we have to see pictures of starving children to motivate us to strike out against poverty, hunger and destruction of millions of children at home and worldwide?

Fact: There are some 1.8 million deaths each year as a result of diarrhea and 443 million school days lost from water-related illness.¹⁷

EIGHTEEN

KNOWN TO THEIR CREATOR

“Who can find a virtuous wife? ...She extends her hand to the poor, yes she reaches out her hands to the needy... Her children rise up and call her blessed. Her husband also, and he praises her.” (Proverbs 31:10, 20, 28)

Millions of infants and children have died from the effects of hunger and food deprivation. Unknown by name to us, each was known to their Creator. They were precious to him.

The Bible often speaks about children. From its opening pages to the end, the terms, “child” and “children” occur almost two thousand times. The Bible children were real boys and girls like those in the world today. Sorrowful stories of lust, dishonor and the suffering of innocent children appear on its pages. We read, for instance, of wicked King Ahaz *“who made his son pass through the fire [and offered him as a sacrifice] in accord with the abominable practices of the heathen nations.”* (2Kings 16: 3 AMP).

The prophets Hosea and Amos speak of infants being dashed to pieces and a pregnant women being ripped open (13:16; MS 1:13). We read of the suffering of the children of Israel (meaning the people, but certainly including infants and small children), and how God responded to that. We know that God didn’t allow Hagar, Sarah’s maid, who was with child by Abraham, to starve or die from lack of water in the wilderness. God saw that unborn child in the mother’s womb and his mercy reached out to her.

When Joshua and Caleb were sent by Moses to spy out the land, and the people murmured and complained because of their report, God was displeased. He spoke judgment against those who murmured and they did not get into the Promised Land. *“But your little ones,” God said, “you said would be victims, I will bring in, and they shall know the land which you despised”* (Numbers 14:31 NKJ).

Call to Action: Shall we learn from the historical evidence of the Bible that children are to be valued and given care and protection, and resolve today to help stamp out cruelty to children, poverty, and hunger?

Fact: Almost one billion people across the globe will go to bed hungry tonight, 200 million of them children.¹⁸

NINETEEN

FAMINE'S FACES

“You shall not afflict any widow or fatherless child.” (Exodus 22:22)

*U.S. News & World Report (February 6, 1989) with bold headlines declared: **STARVATION AS A POLITICAL WEAPON.** The subhead reads: “Famine in Sudan, caused by government action, may be worse than in Ethiopia, 1984.”*

It is a story we had been tracking for many months as we endeavored to find a way to reach these starving Sudanese. The article speaks of a special compound housing Sudanese orphans driven mad by the horrors of losing their families to civil war and starvation. “Some have gone mad, baying and whimpering like stray dogs. These are kept in a special compound, bound hand and foot with string and wires.”

It shows how doctors struggle to save malaria-stricken children. “Sudan’s war takes its heaviest toll in small victims.” It speaks of Famine’s Faces, referring to hungry refugee children wearing doctor’s feeding instructions on tags around their necks as they wait for a meager camp meal. The article appeared right at a time our food shipments had arrived at a seaport city ready to be transported via truck or train into the midst of this mass of human suffering. I read of children writhing naked in the dust, their eyes pleading silently out of their skeletal heads, bloody sores covering matchstick legs. I looked at the pictures and the words describing their little emaciated bodies wracked with malaria and other diseases.

Call to Action: Lester Sumrall paints a graphic portrait of conditions which existed 25 years ago and sadly, still exist today, only the names of the places and people have changed.

Fact: There are 66 million primary age children who attend classes hungry across the developing world, 23 million in Africa. ¹⁹

TWENTY

STAFF OF LIFE

“Sing to the Lord! Praise the Lord! For He has delivered the life of the poor from the hand of evildoers.” (Jer. 20:13)

In the photo story, (U. S. News and World Report, February 6, 1989), I see a rat being held by its tail between the skeletal legs of two boys. The caption reads: meat for sale. Boys trap rats for food. Rats, at \$.25 apiece, and lily pods were the only food for sale in a market at a refugee camp.

Overland supplies of food had been cut off for months with the rebels attacking food convoys and shooting down relief planes. Western relief organizations had been expelled from the country. Even offers by some charity groups to send relief supplies to both government and rebel held areas had been denied. Clearly, starvation as a political weapon was the motive for starving a quarter million people. It is religious warfare and hunger is the last battleground with Islamic fundamentalists in control. What they cannot gain militarily, they hope to win through famine.

This is what famine and hunger is all about. The assault on the stomach in most cases is successful. Millions wander hopelessly from town to town searching for food. The majority of these Sudanese victims fleeing war and famine have been Christians. A whole group of tribe's people face the very real possibility of extinction. Males are regarded as potential enemies. A scorched earth policy has prevailed with the military pillaging and burning villages. Well fed soldiers beat refugees standing in food lines and gleefully watch them starve.

I have seen Jesus in the eyes of hungry children. The words of Matthew 25 ring true. This passage tells us that when the Son of Man comes in his glory, 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. The sheep will be on his right hand, the goats on the left.

Call to Action: The words of Matthew 25 are the words of a King spoken about people who he will separate upon the basis of character. What an hour of separation that will be!

Fact: Undernourishment kills more people every year than malaria, tuberculosis and AIDS combined.²⁰

TWENTY – ONE

A CRY TO THE YOUTH OF THE WORLD

“Rejoice, O young man, in your youth. And let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth; walk in the ways of your heart, and in the sight of your eyes; but know that for all these God will bring you into judgment.” (Eccles. 11:9)

I cry out to the youth of the world to hear the truth regarding the children and youth of the world. In times of tragedy, youth often bear the brunt of it and are hurt the most. I would like to enlist the youth of the Christian world to assist me in combating world hunger. I address you with deepest sincerity. LeSEA’s End-Time Joseph program, (now LeSEA Global Feed the Hungry), is not a game, it is not a sideline, but with deepest conviction, we say that especially among the youth of the Third World countries, we do not want them to die of starvation. We need your energy and your vision to help in rescuing them.

Young men and women, I call upon you to help attack the problems contributing to world hunger. From all world news, hunger is rising like a specter to destroy. For sure, hunger is the dark hole of death. This is especially true of the children and youth of Third World countries. I believe there are multitudes of Christian youth who are now ready to combat world hunger. We can do which together.

In Jerusalem, the Lord spoke to me in the night time saying that world hunger is a prophetic situation. The Bible says that in the last part of this dispensation there shall be great famines worldwide. God is speaking to Christian youth, telling them to combat world hunger before the return to Earth of Jesus of Nazareth as King of kings and Lord of lords.

Youth of the Christian world, hear my plea. Feel my intensity and let’s do it together!

Call to Action: Lester Sumrall could see the outrage of world hunger.

Fact: Undernutrition contributes to 2.6 million deaths of children under five each year—one third of the global total. ²¹

TWENTY-TWO

HUNGER'S EFFECTS

“But his servant said what? Shall I set this before 100 men? He said again, give it to the people that they may eat; for thus says the Lord: they shall eat and have some left over.” (2 Kings 4:43)

Have you ever wondered what happened to the starving survivors in the German war camps upon their liberation at the end of World War II? What actually does happen to the body when it is deprived of food?

We've all seen pictures of these emaciated prisoners of war; they have deep sunken eyes peering out from their gaunt faces. I read of the infamous concentration camp of Bergen-Belson located 55 miles south of Hamburg, Germany. When the victorious British Army reached the camp on April 12, 1945, they found 55,000 barely surviving inmates, many of them near death. Medical experts armed with special food and equipment was flown in to save as many of these camp victims as possible, but thousands were dying. Predigested proteins were given by intravenous injection, but it worsened their condition. Then they tried getting these vital nutrients by mouth, but they were found to be unpalatable. They had been treated so savagely by their Nazi captors, and now they were still dying even with these well meant efforts to save them. Not one of these experts had foreseen what would work best for these victims of starvation. But then it was discovered that the best treatment was to feed them skimmed milk by mouth. That is why even today, when you see pictures of food being unloaded; often you will observe these vast containers of powdered milk. That is why we are so happy when we are able to obtain powdered milk and we can get it into these needy places.

Millions have died from starvation, but health professionals have not always known the best way to resuscitate people who are near death from this cause. There has actually been an appalling dearth of information on the subject.

Call to Action: We who live in a land where a major health problem is obesity have no idea of the ravages of hunger.

Fact: In 2011, one in six children was estimated to be underweight in developing countries with most (56 million) living in south-central Asia.²²

TWENTY-THREE

MALNUTRITION THE CULPRIT

“The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor, he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor, and the day of vengeance of our God.” (Isaiah 61:1-2)

Lowered resistance to disease caused by malnutrition is the primary cause of death for those who have been food deprived. It’s not too hard to understand. When famine strikes or a person is deprived of food for whatever reason, the reduced intake of food is going to lower the body’s resistance. It’s not only famine conditions, but what is termed “undernutrition” defined as deficient bodily nutrition due to inadequate food intake or faulty assimilation resulting in the walking skeletons you see in pictures. Malnutrition refers to poor nutritional status arising from deficiencies of specific nutrients or from diets based on the wrong kinds or wrong proportions of food. And always, compounding the precarious food situation problem in refugee camps, famine or war devastated areas, is the unavailability of health services. An outbreak of measles, for instance, could sweep through the camp, and without nourishment the bodies of little children have no resistance, there is nothing to fight with, and they become statistics. Malnutrition is usually associated with poverty, poor sanitation, and a lack of primary health care. Conventional diseases always increase in incidence and severity whenever there is food deprivation. One of the reasons it is so hard to get an accurate handle on deaths resulting from starvation is because rarely will death be attributed to starvation. Officials of a country and public reaction are such that they will seek to avoid the stigma of the label starvation for a country or a region.

Call to Action: Hunger is thought of as being far off but these conditions are very real and could be resolved given enough public attention and awareness.

Fact: Nearly 870,000,000 people, or one in eight, were suffering from chronic undernourishment in 2010-2012.²³

TWENTY-FOUR

SOCIAL INJUSTICE

“He who opposes the poor reproaches his Maker, but he who honors him has mercy on the needy.” (Proverbs 14:31)

When a population has to adjust to a short food supply, first to die usually are the ill, the aged, the very young, and then the poor. Those who survive the best are the wealthy and the strong. The hungry, for the most part, have one thing in common; they are all poor. Usually it is poverty that starves people to death, not necessarily the callous whims of nature, nor even the stupidity of war. Economics has a lot to do with who goes hungry and who survives. People die because they are poor and cannot afford to buy whatever food is available. They are powerless at the hands of the powerful. It is called social injustice.

For instance, anemias are a complex group of diseases in which the oxygen carrying circulating, red blood cells are deficient in quality or quantity or both. Perhaps you have heard someone say, “He has iron deficient anemia,” meaning his body is not getting enough iron. The red substance of the red blood cells is the protein hemoglobin. That is where most of the iron in the body is found. But a person should not have to die just because he is anemic.

Tragically, even though many lives may be saved as a result of food reaching them in time, the damage that has been done to the developing brains of babies in the world, or to little children, the prenatal damage is just incalculable. This hemoglobin in the red blood cells, as I understand it, is essential to the transporting of oxygen from the lungs to every part of the body. Consider this, muscles can store oxygen, but the brain is unable to do so. Therefore, the brain is critically dependent on a sustained oxygen supply. Deprive the body of iron and other vital nutrients and you begin to get a picture of the devastating affects of hunger.

Call to Action: The horror stories brought about by man made plagues such as depriving people of food is hard to believe people could be so cruel.

Fact: There are 67 million school age children who do not attend school. Poor households must often choose between sending their children to school or to work the fields.²⁴

TWENTY-FIVE

THE MASTER-CREATOR

“You have formed my inward parts; you have covered me in my mother’s womb. I will praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.” (Psalm 139:13-14)

An infant with a full-sized brain could not be delivered through the female birth canal, so God has created us in such a way that the brain nearly triples in size during the first year of life. But for this rapid post natal growth of the brain to take place, it requires a sustained supply of appropriate nutrients in adequate quantity.

What is even more spectacular is the prenatal period of growth. The psalmist knew what he was talking about when he refers to God knowing him in his mother’s womb. “You have formed my inward parts,” David wrote, “you have covered me in my mother’s womb. I will praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.” (Psalm 139:13-14)

But during those nine months of gestation a process is going on precisely programmed by the Master Creator. However, raw materials called food are needed to help get the job done right. Any failure in logistics during that time can be fatal to the brain structure taking place. A chronic deficiency of resources such as caused by malnutrition cannot always be reversed, and a brain defective human will be born.

Now that’s a very simple explanation, I know, but the point to remember is that prenatal malnutrition can seriously affect a person’s entire life by severely inhibiting the number of neurons produced before birth. The damage done to humans by rebellion and war throughout recorded history is well documented. Furthermore, we have some idea of what happens in places where natural disasters occur, floods, locusts, earthquakes, cyclones, hurricanes and typhoons. But what is beginning to emerge in more recent times is the effects of starvation brought about by man-made plagues-depriving people of food, governments deliberately and cynically starving people to death just to improve their bargaining position.

Call to Action: I look at our grandchildren-healthy, intelligent, beautiful little girls and boys-and I thank God daily that they weren’t carried in the wombs of women deprived of life sustaining food.

Fact: More than 20% of children in Asia and Africa are underweight for their age.²⁵

TWENTY-SIX

LONG-LASTING EFFECTS

“If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, “depart in peace, be warmed and filled,” but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit?” (James 2:15-16)

Worldwide we know there are pockets of hunger where malnourished mothers are not contributing adequately to normal placental development so that fetal growth is affected. What kind of children are they bringing into the world? What is going to happen to those who survived in the years ahead? Because it isn't possible to experiment with pregnant women to determine placental adequacy, modern medicine and biology relies on animal studies. We know that depriving pregnant rats of protein results in a reduced number of brain cells in their offspring. As they mature, these rats manifest many abnormalities. It is safe to say that in many places throughout the world today, whole generations of humans will grow up mentally retarded or with major brain defects, deafness, blindness and physically handicapped or disabled in other ways, if they even survive. It will be traceable to food deprivation.

These children will never reach their full biological potential, either physical or mental, no matter how well they are fed in later years. You cannot walk through these refugee camps and observe these children and adults without recognizing that we are already seeing this. Dietary deficiencies result in the stunting of the body as a whole, not only do these children bring a deficient mind to the task of growing up, they are condemned to do poorly in school, with all the consequences this may bring upon him, his family, and society at large. And now researchers are telling us that the influence of malnutrition, including mental retardation, may extend well beyond the malnourished parents and their offspring to the second generation, even if that second generation is well fed.

Call to Action: It is a vicious cycle. A fulfilled life? What do you think?

Fact: As of 2012, 31 million primary school pupils worldwide dropped out of school.²⁶

TWENTY-SEVEN

THE MEANING OF WORDS

“He administers justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the stranger, giving him food and clothing.” (Deut. 10:18)

The words themselves used when we speak of world hunger are used interchangeably, but they can actually mean different things. I have already introduced you to the words “malnutrition” and “undernutrition”. More than anything, I wanted you to see that 80 percent of total brain development takes place between the moment of conception and the age of two, and that medical science is in agreement that severe malnutrition produces irreversible brain damage.

I do not believe we have begun to realize the long-lasting effects and problems that world hunger is going to create. Neither do I believe the world is prepared to cope with what they will find they have on their hands in the years to come.

“Hunger” itself is the group of symptoms that arise from the depletion of food in the body. But these symptoms can disappear quite quickly when food is received.

“Malnutrition” relates to the impairment or risk of impairment to mental and physical health resulting from failure to meet the total nutrient requirements of an individual.

“Starvation” is considered the most extreme form of malnutrition. Accompanying starvation are the physiological symptoms you see in pictures-the edema (swelling of tissue), and often severe and sustained diarrhea which is the frequent prelude to death.

Call to Action: The more we understand the effects of hunger in terms of human pain and suffering the more likely we are to be moved to prevent it.

Fact: 148 million children under the age of 5, in developing regions, are underweight for their age.²⁷

TWENTY-EIGHT

STARVATION DEFINED

“For the poor will never cease from the land; therefore I command you, saying, ‘You shall open your hand wide to your brother, to your poor and your needy, in the land.’ ” (Deut. 15:11)

Adults can survive starvation if it isn't too prolonged; they have bodily reserves they can draw upon for a time. Actually, a healthy human being can go without food for six weeks, as we know from hunger strikes. If, however, hard physical effort or constrained labor is forced upon a starving person, they are reduced to living skeletons and will be unable to carry out the simplest mental or physical tasks. This is what made it so difficult for prisoners of war in the Nazi concentration camps.

Mature adults will usually recover from near starvation, but young, growing children will not. That is why we say children are the most vulnerable victims.

The first manifestation of hunger is the gnawing desire for food, accompanied by surliness, aggression and frenzied activity. With the passage of time if food is not supplied, energy diminishes, strength wanes, and activity is reduced. Before death comes lassitude, listlessness, weakness and exhaustion.

The consequences of the human destruction caused by hunger, malnutrition, and starvation, are greater than those of all wars and epidemics put together.

No wonder Jesus told us to feed the hungry.

Call to Action: The price being paid in unrelenting misery and human degradation is something I hope (this book) has been able to help you see.

Fact: Poor nutrition causes nearly half (45%) of deaths in children under five-3.1 million children each year.²⁸

TWENTY-NINE

HUNGER IN THE MIDST OF PLENTY

“For the needy shall not always be forgotten; the expectation of the poor shall not perish forever.” (Ps. 9:18)

In 1974 the first World Food Conference convened in Rome and created the UN World Food Council to monitor and coordinate implementation of more than twenty recommendations for the production, distribution and consumption of food for food-deficit countries. Strategies were designed that included helping to activate the untapped productivity of the world’s small farmers, most of whom, especially in Africa, are women. Ways were recommended to enlist the participation of poor people themselves in the decisions that profoundly impact their lives. And yet, here we are these many years later, and we still find ourselves confronting the problem of hunger in a world of abundant harvests.

It is a tragic paradox; hunger in the midst of plenty. It is the dark hole of death. What conclusions can be reached? I would like you to understand that hunger is not simply the result of adverse weather, nor is it simply a failure to produce adequate food supplies. Those are myths. They need to be debunked.

Hunger exists largely as the result of policies and actions that are insensitive to the poor. Much of the time the situation, even in a country like America where the problem of the homeless and hungry is beginning to surface like it never has before, much to the embarrassment of our politicians-I repeat, much of the time the hopelessness of a situation and the unwillingness of society to do the right things means that the victims live in a constant state of deprivation and poverty.

Call to Action: Hunger is an outrage precisely because it is profoundly needless.

Fact: Five things contribute to most of the world’s hunger: Poverty, Armed Conflict, Environmental Overload, Discrimination, and Lack of Clout. ²⁹

THIRTY

HUNGER, POVERTY AND POWERLESSNESS

“All my bones shall say, ‘Lord, who is like You, delivering the poor from him who is too strong for him, yes, the poor and the needy from him who plunders him?’ ” (Psalm 35:10)

Research is consistently revealing that it is generally accepted that hunger is caused by poverty and poverty is caused by powerlessness. Some researchers think that people are hungry because they are poor, and they are poor because they don't have the power to choose to be otherwise. I have found that most often poverty is related strongly to transgression of God's laws.

Material advantages invariably fall into the hands of the powerful, and what the poor lack, as much as anything else, is the power to secure what they really need. Among other things, the diseases of poverty weaken people so much that they are often physically unable to do what needs to be done to try to improve their lot in life.

Uninformed people often accuse the poor of being lazy and indolent. They say things like, “Well, they need to get out there and work, raise themselves by their bootstraps and do something.” Some of them do not even have boots!

If the truth were known, most of the time the poor are so ill-fed as to be greatly weakened by malnutrition or undernutrition. It isn't laziness; it's poor physical health producing a lethargy and inability to exert themselves.

Blanket generalizations are very unwise. Certainly there are lazy people in the world. I have met them; so have you. And usually they are poor, though not necessarily starving. So when I say the poor and powerless, I am not referring to those who have taken advantage of systems meant to help truly poor. But if you had seen the poverty and the desperately poor as I have in so many countries, then you would agree that being poor and powerless is a real problem for millions of people in a world of plenty.

Call to Action: Martin Luther King, Jr. once said, “I have the audacity to believe that people everywhere can have three meals a day for their bodies, education and culture for their minds and dignity, equality and freedom for their spirits.”

Fact: 51.4 percent of Americans will live in poverty at some point before age 65. ³⁰

THIRTY-ONE

THE BIBLE HAS MUCH TO SAY ABOUT THE POOR

“To the present hour we both hunger and thirst and we are poorly clothed, and beaten, and homeless.” (1Corinthians 4:11)

“The righteous considers the cause of the poor, but the wicked does not understand such knowledge.” (Proverbs 29:7)

“He who has pity on the poor lends to the Lord. And He will pay back what he has given.” (Proverbs 19:17)

More than anything, what it reveals to me is the all-too-obvious fact that we are a world insensitive to the plight of the poor; we have not obeyed the Bible’s instruction regarding caring for the needy and hungry. Jesus Himself said the poor would always be with us (Matthew 26:11; John 12:3-8). The Gospels show Jesus’ love and concern for the poor.

In many places throughout both the Old and New Testaments, we are reminded of the need to look after the poor. Apparently the Disciples never forgot what Jesus said and this was passed on to Paul the Apostle (Galatians 2:10). Paul identified with the poor, took offerings for them, and considered himself to be one with them in their homelessness, their hunger, being thirsty, and being poorly clothed.

James, believed to be the half-brother of Jesus, and the recognized leader of the Jerusalem Church, in his New Testament letter, has a great deal to say about treating the poor with equality (James 2: 2-13).

“What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, ‘Good, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,’ but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.” (James 2:14-17 NIV)

In the Old Testament we hear David lamenting the lot of the poor in many Psalms, in 37 places the Psalmist speaks of the poor. The Proverbs speak of the poor with great sensitivity. There are many cautions given about how to regard and treat the poor and needy. We would be wise to read and heed them.

Call to Action: We will be held accountable for how we have treated the poor, hungry and powerless of the world.

Fact: If women farmers had the same access to resources as men, the number of hungry in the world could be reduced by up to 150 million.³¹

THIRTY-TWO

THE WORLD'S TREATMENT OF THE POOR

“You shame the counsel of the poor, but the Lord is his refuge.” (Psalm 14:6)

One of my associates attended the 1988 World Food Conference held in Des Moines, Iowa. She was one of five hundred conveners from 22 nations that included Iowa State and other university participants, in addition to guests representing the governments of different countries, including the U.S. Many private interest groups, associations and organizations were present including such companies as Dow Chemical, seed companies, the American Soybean Association, and others. Farm groups were represented with farmer speaker representatives in abundance. Private donor organizations were there including Church World Service, Catholic Relief Services, Lutheran World Relief American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, Heifer Project International, the Self-Help Foundation, and our own organization, LeSEA.

There was much rhetoric and speeches about trade policies, trade reform, etc. But one astute gentleman from the European Parliament captured her attention and received applause when he stood up arguing that more consideration be given to people than these other subjects.

In spite of that man's statement, the focus constantly turned toward economic and agricultural policies. There was a great deal of concern being expressed by the farm associations and their farmer members about the need for continued farm subsidies, and she saw a lot of private lobbying efforts going on in the lobby and halls as legislators were being cornered.

Aman from the Netherlands kept pointing out that the hunger problem worldwide is basically a poverty problem. Later, in a private conversation with this man, they agreed that if the hungry could eat words, Africa and other desperately needy areas of the world, would have recovered as a result of the ongoing rhetoric.

Call to Action: The poor receive little benefit from much talk about policies to eradicate hunger.

Fact: 14.5 percent of U.S. households struggle to put enough food on the table. ³²

THIRTY-THREE

POLICY MAKING AND THE POVERTY PICTURE

“Jesus answered, ‘If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in Heaven.’ ” (Matthew 19:21)

The 1988 World Food Conference did have spokespeople for the poor who had opportunity to speak their hearts. The Hollander emphasized forcefully that the poor are outside the market-oriented problems, “They have no part in policy-making”, he said. Such views weren’t necessarily popular with the majority of the people present, especially those who represented private industry and farming interests, who would benefit from policy-oriented discussions and recommendations. “Income distribution is a major problem”, one gentleman pointed out. “More “free trade” in agriculture is no necessarily a good thing. Developing countries are stuck with vast numbers of unemployed people which creates a tremendous problem in the poverty picture. It was good to know there are people who do recognize the poverty picture. A man from India pointed out that countries not considered “poor” should not be so arrogant as to think they have all the answers. “You demean nations too often in your aid efforts”, he said. “Self-interest motivates many people. But our people need tools to work with; they need roads to get their crops to market. They have health problems.”

The problem of multi-national companies pushing poor people off their land was of major concern. Many of these are government sanctioned monopolies who are developing a tremendous power base, literally raping the country’s resources, depriving the nationals of the means to support their families. Many powerful people in these countries are the ones benefitting from subsidies, not the poor people for whom subsidies are intended.

Call to Action: It’s time for the Christian church to recognize her God-given responsibility and come to the aid of the poor and impoverished.

Fact: The world’s low income countries (2.4 billion people) account for just 2.4% of world exports.³³

THIRTY-FOUR

THE POVERTY TRAP

“In Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (which, when translated, is Dorcas), who was always doing good and helping the poor.” (Acts 9:36)

That people get trapped in poverty can never be denied, not by any thinking person. Hunger is an overwhelming, and endemic problem in developing world countries. A great majority of the world's hungriest people live and work in rural areas which are a long way from the main centers of wealth. Many of these people are tenant farmers or landless laborers. Poor farmers do not have advantages afforded to the more affluent. For example, they lack access to credit and to technical support that could improve production of their meager crops.

The cities in the developing world countries are swelling rapidly as people are forced off the land and migrate to the cities. There they are once again confronted with the reality of the inequalities of life, the unequal distribution of purchasing power, the difficulties they encounter in finding employment.

The circumstances in which the poor live are as varied as the many cultures of the human race; but the one thing they all share in common is that they are all poor and, for the most part, hungry. Until it is widely acknowledged that the ongoing problem of world hunger is directly related to treatment of the poor, not much progress will be made in halting the growth of the problem. It cannot be over emphasized that the poor are powerless within a system of injustice. The poverty trap is real.

Poverty is the basic cause of hunger. Hunger is one of the most visible parts of the problem. The causes of poverty are also the causes of hunger. What is needed is justice in a hungry world. Children for example need to be educated. When you educate a child and give him an opportunity to fend for himself in the world, you break the cycle of family property.

Call to Action: Until causes which widened the gap between rich and poor are identified and changed, people will continue to suffer and die from hunger.

Fact: Educated girls are likely to marry later and have fewer children, who in turn will be more likely to survive and be better nourished and educated. ³⁴

THIRTY-FIVE

THE CHRISTIAN SOLUTION

“The poor man called, and the Lord heard him; he saved him out of all his troubles.” (Psalm 34:6)

There is a story in the Gospel of Luke that I believe vividly portrays for us the necessity to be about our father’s business today, now, while there is yet time. It is the story of the rich man and Lazarus, a diseased beggar, utterly destitute, reduced to begging alms, a man covered with an ulcerated sores. One day someone laid Lazarus at the door of the rich man “who was splendidly clothed and lived each day in mirth and luxury”. (Reference Luke 16:21-31)

In every country there is “the rich man and Lazarus”. Lazarus, while still alive, asked for only crumbs for his dying body. The rich man, who fared sumptuously on earth, was reduced to begging for one drop of water in Hades.

While we feast and satisfy our gluttonous appetites, and indulge our uncontrolled eating habits, tens of thousands of people die from hunger and starvation related causes in poverty-stricken areas of the world every day.

Compassion can end world hunger. The rich man had no compassion for Lazarus. I pray to God that there will be no rich Christians reading this who, after reading it, will be able to remain indifferent to the plight of the world’s hungry people.

Call to Action: Pagan decadence has contributed to the ongoing problem of world hunger.

Fact: Rural areas account for three in every four people living on less than one dollar a day and a similar share of the world population is suffering from malnutrition. ³⁵

THIRTY-SIX

THE WORLD HUNGER BELT AND THE EMPIRES OF HISTORY

“They devour widow’s houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. Such men will be punished most severely.” (Mark 12:40)

In studying the major empires of history, I have discovered an amazing fact-the power belt of the nations lie in the middle of the world. There have been six major empires in history which have ruled the world economically, artistically, and intellectually. These empires are: Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece and the Roman Empires. It is this same area that has a concentration of major agricultural resources supplying much of the food for the rest of the world. Many of the major famines have occurred outside this belt.

The rich and poor countries can actually be shown as having a North-South divide, with the countries of the North being mostly industrial market economies. Nonmarket economies already comprise the second world, countries that are still the major consumers of raw materials produced in the South. And nations of the South are referred to as developing countries.

It boils down to the haves and have-nots. Victims are not always in the poor countries. If that were the case, how would you explain the bread lines and soup kitchens in the United States? It’s not food shortage necessarily in many parts of the world; it is a shortage of political morality that we face. If people go hungry in a world of plenty, it’s because someone somewhere is creating that hunger by policies that discriminate against them.

International trading systems-tariffs, commodity prices, quotas and monopolies are the culprits keeping poor countries at the mercy of the rich industrial world. Northern government’s policies on aid and military strategy have compounded the problems. Freedom from hunger is, among other things, a political issue, and a question of human rights. So it comes down to an unavoidable conclusion; what the poor and hungry lack more than anything is the power to secure what they really need.

Call to Action: There is more than sufficient food currently being produced to feed every man, woman and child on planet Earth.

Fact: The vast majority of hungry people, 827 million, live in developing countries, where 14.3% of the population is under nourished.³⁶

THIRTY-SEVEN

THE SCANDAL OF WORLD HUNGER

“A generous man will himself be blessed, for he shares his food with the poor.” (Proverbs 22:9)

The scandal of world hunger is a big subject. For example, Brazil is considered to be one of the richest nations in the world, yet there are there are millions of people living there in extreme poverty, most are considered malnourished. Such enormous disparities in wealth exist on other continents such as Latin America Africa and Asia.

And in the United States, especially in our vast metropolitan areas, there are people living on the streets, roaming aimlessly seeking handouts, scavengers and garbage dumpsters, living in welfare hotels in the bleakest of surroundings. It is estimated that one in six persons in America will go to bed hungry every night. Many of these people would be considered what is now being called “the new poor”. They are people, some of whom were caught in the process of de-industrialization of our country when men and women were released from their manufacturing jobs. Breadwinners are without jobs and resources. Imagine that-hunger in a bountiful land such as ours.

It is basically the world’s system that determines who receives enough to eat. That’s why the work of Christian relief organizations, such as ours and others, is so important. We seek to work within the parameters established, not moving outside of that which is legal, but avoiding red tape and bureaucracy. We will not be intimidated into acquiescing to the demands of unfair systems.

Call to Action: Because the needs are so great and we stand ready with desperately needed supplies, we find favor with governments and are able to move in with help and hope.

Fact: 15.9 million children under 18 in the United States live in households where they are unable to consistently access enough nutritious food necessary for a healthy life.³⁷

THIRTY-EIGHT

FOOD PRODUCTION

“When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. Leave them for the poor and the alien. (Lev. 23:22)

There are three main cereal crops that provide the basic food for most of the world, whether directly consumed or converted into meat and dairy products. They are wheat, rice and maize. Wheat production is dominated by the Soviet Union, the United States, and surprisingly, China. The United States also produces about 30% of the world coarse grains, including maize. The top five producers of rice, however, are all from the south with China leading the field and India's second. The success story of the Green Revolution in India is attributed to an American hunger fighter, Norman Borlaug, winner of the Nobel Peace Prize for his humanitarian efforts. This Green Revolution was primarily a phenomenon of high-yielding wheat and rice. The creation of hunger in the Sudan and other places in Africa has its roots in many causes including weather conditions and drought, and mismanaged independence, civil strife, nation going to war against another nation in their own continent. But there are other forces that cannot be ignored. African elites have worsened the plight of their own countrymen through political and economic processes that set the scene for so much hardship. Someone has observed that whereas once it was slave ships, it is now the transfer of Africa's wealth in the form of commodities and finance to the coffers of the North.

Call to Action: “A man has to be a Torero; a bullfighter. He has to sidestep bureaucracy and red tape.” (Norman Borlaug)

Fact: 90% of the developing world chronically undernourished children live in Asia or Africa. ³⁸

THIRTY-NINE

FROM FORTUNE TO FAMINE

“Cursed is the man who withholds justice from the alien, the fatherless or the widow.” (Deut. 27:19)

But isn't it amazing that a place like the Sudan was once considered the “bread-basket of the Arab World”? How does a nation go from stability to crisis? The answer is complex, but certainly control of her resources –human, mineral and agricultural-is one of the prime causes. The poor have no control. For these people, 87 percent of the population who live in the countryside, they have little, if any, contact with the central government. The United Nations has estimated that at the height of the famine in the mid-1980's, 1.5 million Sudanese had been driven from their homes, 1 million were at risk of starvation, and an estimated 150 persons per day were dying of starvation.

From fortune to famine-the underlying theme is one of poverty, lack of land for the poor to farm, and systematic neglect. The people-victims of decisions to organize the national economy in specific ways that failed to take into account their future destiny.

There was a time when the traditional relationship between landowners and tenants was mutually beneficial. Those who controlled the land knew that their tenant farmers produced their wealth so they took care of them. They didn't starve.

Call to Action: A common Sudanese expression is that most of the common people “will never taste the dollars”.

Fact: Not every poor person is hungry, but almost all hungry people are poor. Millions live with hunger because they simply cannot afford to buy enough food, cannot afford nutritious foods, or cannot afford the farming supplies they need to grow enough good food of their own. ³⁹

FORTY

THE TYRANNY OF THE NEW

“Because of the oppression of the weak and the groaning of the needy, I will now arise,” says the Lord, “I will protect them from those who malign them.” (Psalm 12:5)

With the advent of new methods of farming-mechanization, cash-cropping and large scale farming-changes came forcing the little people off the land. Traditional lifestyles of the peasant landowners that had existed for generations were suddenly gone. In its place came commercial farming geared toward the export market increasingly vulnerable to the changing fortunes of the national economy.

This kind of exploitation of the small farmers and the nomads in many developing nations is an all too common tale. Investors and entrepreneurs who could afford it were able to wrest the land away from the people. Very often what remains is extreme wealth at one level and extreme poverty at another, with middlemen in between... But it is the landless rural poor and the jobless urban poor who suffer from increased poverty and hunger.

There is yet another side to this picture of suffering and famine that is taking place in so many parts of the world. I have long observed that the major heathen religions were born in the parts of the world that have experienced the greatest famines. Look at India, China, Japan, Eastern and central Asia, and observe the dominant worship of pagan gods, cultic practices, and demons. Satan takes control where people have turned their backs on God.

Scripture declares that in the last days more people will turn to heathen religions, idolatry and superstition.

Call to Action: “I have the audacity to believe that people everywhere can have three meals a day for their bodies, education and culture for the minds and dignity, equality and freedom for their spirits.” (Martin Luther King, Jr.)

Fact: Malnourished women give birth to malnourished children and are at risk of death during childbirth.⁴⁰

FORTY-ONE

CONSEQUENCES OF TURNING FROM GOD

“The poor will see and be glad-you who seek God, may your hearts live!” (Ps. 69:32)

When someone turns his back on God, he snaps the anchor chain that would hold him steady in the storms of life. He casts himself adrift on an ocean of ethical uncertainty. Such a person brings anguish into his own life and very often into the lives of his innocent children and others. The Bible says that if a person lifts up his eyes to idols, he shall surely die (Ezekiel 18:12-13). Pagan decadence has contributed to the ongoing hunger and death by starvation problem. God has always sent His messengers to warn people. God has never left people ignorant of Himself (Romans 1:18-32). But He has declared that tribulation and anguish will fall upon everyone who rejects Him (Romans 2:9). We have only to look back into history, and at what is happening today worldwide to see that what God has declared does happen. Make no mistake, these are end-times. Jesus said, “For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places.” (Matthew 24:7)

Call to Action: “Make us worthy, Lord, to serve those throughout the world who live and die in poverty and hunger. Give them, through our hands, this day their daily bread; and by our understanding love, give peace and joy. Amen” (Mother Teresa of Calcutta)

Fact: 7.6 million children worldwide died before their 5th birthday in 2010. ⁴¹

FORTY-TWO

WORLD HUNGER MYTH: OVERPOPULATION

“However, there should be no poor among you, for in the land the LORD your God is giving you to possess as your inheritance, He will richly bless you.” (Deut. 15:4)

Why do people in India and all the (Third World) Countries have so many babies? Don't they know anything about birth control? And if we are going to help them, why don't we provide them with birth control information, condoms, and devices? Questions like this and others about overpopulation are often said condescendingly and with a good deal of insensitivity, prejudice and misinformation.

If you lived in one of these countries and you knew that one out of every five children dies before the age of five, and if your children were viewed as security for your old age, wouldn't you want to make sure you had survivors? Children are needed as workers. Poor people have lots of children to secure their future; people rely on their families for survival.

Moreover, these parents love their children. They grieve when they lose a little one to malnutrition... Put yourself in the place of an African mother, holding that pitiful little baby to her breast, while she is so emaciated herself she can hardly stand. Such mothers hope some of their children will survive, proud of their race and traditions.

In some respects, what the Western World is saying sounds like developing world country people should become fewer so we can become more, as well as richer.

Some people will point to overpopulation as a cause of pollution in today's world. The truth is that children in our culture, meaning the more “civilized” Western World, pollute the earth probably fifty times more than the average Indian child, for instance, ever will.

Cultural considerations also account for large families in certain countries. In Kenya, for instance, men cannot “hold their head high” until they have many sons.

Certain Governments, such as China, seek to limit families to one child. The traditional preference is to male offspring, so there is evidence of infanticide.

Frances Moore Lappe and Joseph Collins have isolated the twelve most widely circulated myths regarding world hunger and have written definitively about them in their book, *World Hunger: Twelve Myths*. The overpopulation myth they explain under the chapter title, “Too Many Mouths to Feed”. They explain the myth like this; *MYTH: Hunger is caused by too many people pressing against finite resources. We must slow population growth before we can hope to alleviate hunger.*

They show quite conclusively that population density and hunger do not consistently occur together. As one surveys the globe, you are hard put to find an absolute correlation between population density and hunger

Call to Action: Millions of hungry people needing their daily bread are no myth!

Fact: A mere 12 percent of the world's population uses 85 percent of its water, and these 12 percent do not live in the Third World.⁴²

FORTY-THREE

HUNGER AND POPULATION GROWTH AS CONSEQUENCES

“Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in Heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys.” (Luke 12:33)

Still, most of the world’s hungry live in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, where populations grow the fastest. What, if any, is the association between the two? After close examination of all the factors, Frances Lappe and Joseph Collins point to hunger and the rapid population growth as both being consequences of similar social realities. High birthrates reflect people’s defensive reaction against enforced poverty. Rapid population growth and corresponding hunger result where societies deny security and opportunity to the majority of their citizens-where adequate land, jobs, education, health care, and old age security are beyond the reach of most people. When you are living at the margin of survival, having children who can go out and work or scrounge for food is considered an advantage, not a disadvantage.

Another factor-which is a cultural thing-relates to the fact that bigger families carry more weight in community affairs. So there are many aspects to consider when talking about overpopulation and we cannot be simplistic or make hasty blanket generalizations.

It must also be recognized that in many of these developing countries, where family planning is relatively new or unknown, women have very little say about what does or does not happen.

Where changes have been most rapid and economic well-being of the family has occurred, it has been proven that the women have been successful in regaining control of their lives and their bodies. The changing status of women from child-bearer to breadwinner has really revolutionized the lifestyle for some families.

Some women don’t have much opportunity to choose to have fewer children when their husbands have all the power in the family. In developing countries women do not have access to health services that would help educate them. These societies are highly patriarchal.

Call to Action: Population growth rate is a concern; however, high birthrates are primarily related to economic uncertainties, not to availability of land.

Fact: In every country where malnutrition has been reduced and child death rates have decreased, birthrates have also dropped dramatically.⁴³

FORTY-FOUR

MYTH: NOT ENOUGH FOOD TO GO AROUND

“Do not go over your vineyard a second time or pick up the grapes that have fallen. Leave them for the poor and the alien. I am the LORD your God.” (Leviticus 19:10)

It’s hard to believe, but there are a lot of people who honestly believe there isn’t enough food in the world to go around. That is a myth that needs debunking.

There is plenty of food in the world. There are huge surpluses of unused food in various parts of the world. Actually, the food currently produced each year is more than enough to feed the projected 10 billion people anticipated by year 2000. [Note; actual population as of 2013 census is 7.16 Billion].

Still, hunger in many places throughout the world is real; but scarcity is not. A paradox. Hunger is such an outrage because it is so needless. There are real causes but it’s not because there isn’t enough food to go around.

Africa, for example, where thousands are starving every day, are exporters of agricultural products including corn, a major staple of African families. India, which ranks near the top among Third World agricultural exporters, exporting everything from wheat to beef, reportedly has as many as 300 million going hungry.

Most of the hungriest countries of the world have enough food for all their people right now. Still hunger ravages and decimates much of the population. The poor are unable to get their hands on it, or even if they could reach it, to purchase it. The real problem lies primarily in man-made and therefore reversible causes. In study after study, prestigious international commissions have come to one conclusion; Humanity now possesses the resources, technology and know-how to end hunger. (The Hunger Project, *Ending Hunger; An Idea Whose Time Has Come*. (1985) NY: Praeger Publishing.)

Call to Action: Human mismanagement of earth’s resources, neglect of the needy, the rural farmers and peasants, is a contributing culprit; not shortages or insufficient land.

Fact: About 21,000 people or one person every four seconds dies every day of hunger or hunger-related causes. ⁴⁴

FORTY-FIVE

MYTH: NATURE IS TO BLAME

“He who observes the wind will not sow, and he who regards the clouds will not reap.” (Eccl. 11:4)

Undeniably, we live in a kind of “media age”, paying attention to what hits the evening news and makes the headlines at the moment. So it is that droughts and famines have caught our attention, just as armed conflicts, violence, and civil strife have made us more aware of what’s happening around the world.

Therefore, nature gets blamed for starvation. Droughts, floods, earthquakes-these are beyond the control of humankind. Statistics don’t lie. So when you read and hear about the millions pushed into destitution by the forces of nature, the assumption is easy to make-the weather causes people to suffer and/or die of hunger.

But if weather is the cause, why don’t people in the United States die of starvation when drought hits the mid-west plains, or a cyclone sweeps through a region? Would an earthquake cause such widespread hunger as to be listed as the cause of death were it to strike in some part of this country?

The truth is that behind each natural disaster lies a multitude of human error that causes the poorest of the poor to suffer the full impact of nature for they are already living on the edge of subsistence. In the United States when a natural disaster occurs, rescue and relief efforts are immediately put into effect. That this does not happen in many parts of the world is a reality that cannot be denied. But to say that nature is the cause is to fail to recognize how ill-equipped some parts of the world are to handle natural disasters.

Following the infamous 1985 Ethiopian drought researchers discovered that feudal landlordism, hoarding, and governmental policies and indifference contributed to the tragic deaths and widespread suffering and, in fact, their conclusion was that famines are not necessarily natural disasters, but social disasters, the results of human arrangements, not acts of God.

Call to Action: The way people think about hunger can be the greatest obstacle to overcoming it.

Fact: 1.8 billion people who have access to a water source within half a mile, but not in their house or yard, consume around 5 gallons of water per day. In the US, the average water use is 158 gallons per day.⁴⁵

FORTY-SIX

OUR EXAMPLE

“When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or your relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and you will be repaid. But, when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.” (Luke 14:12-14 NIV)

How easily we overlook what the Bible has to say about the poor and hungry. The verse of Scripture quoted above is what Jesus said to one of the Pharisees who invited Him to dinner. Previous verses relate a parable Jesus told of how invited guests to a wedding feast had, as it were, jostled for the best seats, the place of distinction. The guests were well-to-do, prosperous, smug, a self-satisfied crowd struggling for these chief seats. He showed how despicable this was and then, turning to his host related that a truly honorable man does not act like that. Jesus’ ideas and words were revolutionary. On this occasion, He was showing the relationship between bad manners and motives and good motives and good manners. The great returns in life will not come in the here and now; they lie in the life that lies beyond. Jesus told us how to treat the poor and needy. When we fail to act upon the example He has given, we, in effect, are offering excuses. Back of our feeble excuses is a lack of desire to obey Our Lord. We reveal the poverty in our own hearts; we show all too clearly by what we are possessed.

Call to Action: Psalm 41 speaks of the blessedness that comes to those who consider the plight of the helpless, the weak, and the poor, and is worthy of our study. God has promised to bless and take care of those who have regard for the poor.

Fact: In 2012 16.1 million or approximately 22 percent of children in the US lived in poverty. ⁴⁶

FORTY-SEVEN

WHY DOES HUNGER PERSIST

“Defend the cause of the weak and fatherless; maintain the rights of the poor and oppressed. Rescue the weak and needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked.” (Psalm 82:3-4)

Hunger persists, is held in place, by many global forces-economic, political, philosophical, cultural and even psychological.

Food availability is at the heart of ending hunger. The three aspects of this issue revolve around food production, food shortage and security, and distribution.

We’ve already looked at food production and concluded that enough food is currently being produced to feed everyone on planet Earth. World food production has been increasing steadily for decades. The problem is that these food production increases have not occurred evenly throughout the world.

The question is sometimes asked: How much land is available for growing food worldwide?

There are 13 billion hectares (a hectare is 2.47 acres) of land in the world, and the total cultivatable land is generally agreed to be about 3.2 billion hectares.

The potential for creating new tillable land increases as knowledge, machinery, and power sources are further developed and improved and then put to use and made available to developing countries.

Are we going to run out of land to grow crops in the US? There were dire predictions about urban “sprawl” taking over agriculture land which have not materialized. Indeed, urban areas of the United States occupy less than 2% of the entire land surface of the country. Moreover technology has moved us to a place where ruined land can be reclaimed, and even water tables can be regulated.

A myth does exist, however, that says we cannot both feed the hungry and protect our environment. Agriculture technology introduced the “Green Revolution”, fathered by Norman Borlaug, believing that technology can conserve, even enhance environmental resources. Billions of pounds of pesticides are used annually throughout the world. The human health toll, as a result, is said to be staggering by those who oppose many of these technological advances. Pesticides are expensive and are used primarily by politically influential owners of large commercial farms. Governments in developing countries spend hundreds of millions of dollars annually to subsidize pesticide use.

We must pray that those who till the land and produce the crops will not abuse the earth’s resources, and that they will use the latest scientific knowledge wisely to produce food economically without harming the environment or the health of mankind.

Call to Action: The poor and disadvantaged are dependent on others, social changes are desperately needed, and this is where the help of the private sector organizations has been the most beneficial.

Fact: For the 1.9 billion children from the developing world, 270 million are without access to health services.⁴⁷

FORTY-EIGHT

FOOD SECURITY AND ABUSE

“The scoundrel’s methods are wicked; he makes up evil schemes to destroy the poor with lies, even when the plea of the needy is just.” (Isaiah 32:7)

While there are those who insist that the “Green Revolution” and advanced technology will put an end to hunger, results in some places seem to disprove these claims. But the economic ground rules governing distribution no doubt has more to do with answering the why than the actual greater production that is afforded. Today, while food production advances, hunger widens. There are those who are saying that we may now be moving into a very difficult situation where food security may replace military security as the principal preoccupation of many governments in the world.

Since Bible times, people have found ways to store food as protection against drought, famine, and poor crops. Worldwide we need agricultural programs-including storage, security and distribution-that we can all live with. A cornerstone of the food-secure world of Joseph’s day in Egypt was the fortified granaries he had built as depository for grain, ready for when famine came. (Gen. 41:33-41).

Famine watchers and researchers agree on the importance of an effective system of food storage, but questions arise as to who should hold these reserves and who should distribute them when the needs arise. An internationally coordinated system of food security seems to be the answer but there are some formidable logistics and problems. There are those who say that justice and production are competing goals. Others say that the free market can end hunger if governments just got out of the way. Foreign aid is only as good as the recipient government. As Francis Moore Lappe and Joseph Collins point out, “Where the recipient government answers only to a narrow economic elite, our aid not only fails to reach the hungry, it girds the very forces working against them” (World Hunger, Twelve Myths...p.133).

Call to Action: It is difficult to overstate the vital importance of the work of private donor organizations such as LeSEA Global Feed the Hungry that can overcome the abuse and provide secure transport and distribution of life saving food supplies.

Fact: Human poverty includes lack of proper diet, clothing, shelter, and work. It also includes social deprivation, such as denial of employment, participation in social institutions, and education.⁴⁸

FORTY-NINE

ROUTING THE ENEMY HUNGER

“But whoever has this world’s goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? My little children let us not love in word or in tongue but in deed and in truth.” (1 John 3:17-18)

“In my judgment the Christian Faith does not lend itself to much preaching or talking. It is best propagated by living it or applying it...When will you Christians really crown Jesus Christ as the Prince of Peace and proclaim Him through your deeds as the champion of the poor and the oppressed?” (Gandhi)

Hunger has stepped into the thinking of millions around the world as they have encountered the specter in its various forms. This includes those responsible for administering foreign aid programs, and it includes private donor organizations. These are people who are seeking ways to end the problem of hunger, many of whom are the private donor organizations such as our own End-Time Joseph Program to Feed the Hungry.

When going into an emergency situation, the greatest immediate need is for food, of course, however, we sponsor other programs with great effectiveness including medical assistance, clothing, blankets, and other needs. In these ways hunger has been routed, lives have been changed, and needs have been met.

Many of us, as Christian donor organizations, work together in emergency-aid partnering. If one organization has access to supplies and equipment for a particular needy spot, others provide the financial help. Donor organizations such as ours work collaboratively with corporations and private donors assuring the philanthropic community of trustworthy means of making certain their actual donations get to the truly needy. As a worldwide ministry LeSEA has helped people with ongoing direct aid programs into Poland, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Africa, Haiti, South and Central America, and others, including the United States as needs come to our attention.

Call to Action: It’s amazing how much can be accomplished when you are not consumed with whom gets the credit.

Fact: Women suffer twice the malnutrition rate as men. Girls are twice as likely to die from malnutrition as boys.⁴⁹

FIFTY

A PASTOR TO PASTOR PROGRAM

“When Jesus heard this, He said to him, “You still lack one thing. Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in Heaven. Then, come, follow me.” (Luke 18:22)

When God gave me the vision in Jerusalem in the Fall of 1987, He said this was to be a pastor-to-pastor program. We were to call for 10,000 pastors to challenge world hunger. The Lord showed me that these pastors were to lead their churches in responding to the Biblical mandate to feed the hungry and “set at liberty those who are oppressed.”

(Luke 4:18)

Pastors around the world have responded including around the United States. Many have accompanied us on feeding trips, going into refugee camps and places where pastors are ministering locally in the hunger pockets of the world. Prior to entering a given locale we always secure a guarantee from the government insuring that we can hand the food to local pastors who will be able to give it to the people...

For instance, in Zimbabwe, at a feeding area, we met with the regional administrator and his assistants. The first thing he asked was why we could not give the food to them and let them distribute it since they were the government administrators for the area. I answered him kindly, but candidly, telling him that this was not food given by public solicitation; but that this was food donated by pastors and their churches and that we were not permitted to give it to anyone but a pastor and his church.

After the administrators observed us in one of the rooms of a humble school building serving happy people receiving their bags of maize with shouting, rejoicing and singing, he said, “You can do this any time. This is the most beautiful thing I have ever seen, and you have done it so beautifully, without any kind of prejudice.”

In this particular distribution, we dispensed 60.5 tons of maize meal and left an additional 44 tons which has been distributed in Malawi. In addition, we left 1200 blankets which were distributed in Malawi.

You can not imagine the deprivation of these people. The things we take so much for granted—blankets, roofs, walls and windows in our homes, changes of clothing, shoes, running water, toilets and toilet paper—just to mention some basic necessities are for the most part unknown to these people. Their source of water was a murky hole in the ground, not the kind of water you and I would even think of drinking, yet this was all they had.

Call to Action: We can't do everything, but we can do something.

Fact: Some 1.1 billion people in developing countries have inadequate access to water. ⁵⁰

FIFTY-ONE

A THREE-PRONGED APPROACH

“He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap; He seats them with princes and has them inherit a throne of honor.” (1Samuel 2:8)

Ours is a three-pronged approach to rout both spiritual and physical hunger. Not only does the body of Christ in these faraway corners of the globe need food to sustain them, but they need spiritual help and encouragement as well.

So our program has three distinct outreaches: we feed the hungry, we strengthen churches with pastors’ seminars, and we strengthen the people through evangelistic crusades with proclamation of the gospel, spiritual transformation-setting people free from bondage to the devil and demonic power-in prayer for the sick and oppressed.

The pastors on the field where we have been ministering recognize that we come from a long way with a heart of compassion to help them. I tell them, “I am here representing many hundreds of Christians from around the world. This food did not come from rich people; it came from people who want to love you just like Jesus told us to love one another. We have deep compassion for those who suffer. We come in Jesus’ name. He came from heaven to bless us and we are here to bless you. Someday we can all live together with Jesus in heaven. There won’t be any difference in the color of our faces, and there will be no more hunger and sickness.”

God has blessed our approach, and we find favor with government and church leaders wherever we go. We met with provincial leaders in Mozambique at a cabinet meeting. They told us that in the recent civil war 1,000 schools, 200 hospitals, and 50 bridges had been destroyed in the country. We learned that there were 600,000 displaced persons in Mozambique in 100 refugee camps. These stories could be repeated in many places throughout the world.

Call to Action: Hunger is dehumanizing and debilitating, and no one need die of hunger.

Fact: 66 million primary school-age children attend classes hungry across the developing world, with 23 million in Africa alone.⁵¹

FIFTY-TWO

NEEDED: COMMITTED ACTION

“The poor and the needy search for water, but there is none; their tongues are parched with thirst. But I the LORD will answer them; the God of Israel will not forsake them.” (Isaiah 41:17)

Ours is an incredibly fertile and productive planet right now, and we could produce much more. The earth is already producing more than enough food to feed hundreds of millions more than is now alive. No one need die of hunger.

What is needed is committed action on the part of the world community. I find it of tremendous importance that the world’s Christian community has responded and are responding as they are. Breakthroughs can be achieved that will alleviate much of the hunger. The question that is being asked is: “Which pathway will nations and the world community pursue to ensure that enough food in the right places is available to all?”

The LeSEA Global Feed the Hungry ministry is committed to a compassionate response. The Bible is clear in setting forth the responsibility of those who have toward those who have not. (1John 3:17-18)

With God’s help, and the help of His people, we will continue to seek ways to help rout hunger from Planet Earth, and to ease the suffering of the hungry and the needy. Christians know the truth of these words: “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35).

Call to Action: God is not stuck on a world-view that has geographical, political and racial boundaries.

Fact: Malnutrition is caused by more than just a lack of dietary energy. It can occur if the quality or variety of food is insufficient even if there is plenty in terms of quantity. ⁵²

FIFTY-THREE

THE CHALLENGE

“Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.” (1Tim.6:17-19)

This world in which we live presents many challenges. You can call them “problems” if you wish. But an old Chinese Proverb suggests a way of looking at problems that appeal to me. It says to regard “problems” as “golden opportunities”.

In a world that spends hundreds of millions on their military establishments while millions are hungry and die of hunger-related causes at the same time, the greatest challenge is the welfare of people. Some of the poorest nations of the world actually allocate between two and ten percent of their GNP for military purposes.

National security is a priority. Hunger problems often increase amidst the chaos and social upheaval and accompany revolutions. Funds that could help put an end to poverty and hunger are pre-empted by military uses. When a government spends more on militarism of a society than it does on education and health, it plays havoc with the production of food and other necessities of life.

The challenge is to safeguard the welfare of nations without depriving the majority of the people of their basic human need and rights. Those who believe military spending is in the best interests of society say that social benefits will follow. But development of developing countries can best take place under conditions of order and stability. Crisis conditions are not conducive to social justice. Violence and terrorism have brought unimaginable suffering to vast numbers of the victimized. The root causes of the world’s underlying tensions must be removed and/or resolved.

Call to Action: No effort in the name of Jesus is small. Little is much when God is in it!

Fact: Some 1.8 million child deaths each year as a result of diarrhea. ⁵³

FIFTY-FOUR

A CHANGING WORLD

“You give them something to eat.” (Mark 6:37)

The world is changing. It has changed dramatically since the day when I, as a seventeen-year-old boy, felt the call of God upon my life and began my global trek. I have preached the Gospel in over a hundred countries and have ministered in more than a thousand of the world’s cities. I have observed great changes firsthand.

Conservative estimates say the global population may rise to ten billion during the 21st century. If something isn’t done to bring about revolutionary changes the outlook for the future and the problem of hunger looms as very bleak.

But I am not a pessimist. We have a God in Heaven who is concerned about people here on Earth. The challenge that presents itself is that of getting food and resources from places of plenty to places of need.

When Jesus left the earth, He left behind instructions on how we, as stewards of this planet, were to care for it and the people who populated it. Our mandate is plainly spelled out in ever so many places. Anything we can do can make a big difference and impact the lives of suffering people in so many places.

No effort in the Name of Jesus is small. Just to look at Jesus’ life is to be challenged to seize the opportunities. His was the perspective of doing what He could for those who came within His scope of awareness. We can do that.

Call to Action: God didn’t command the governments of the world to feed the hungry; He said His people were to do it. (Matt. 25:31-46).

Fact: 1.02 billion people in the developing world are undernourished. They consume less than the minimum amount of calories essential for sound health and growth. ⁵⁴

FIFTY-FIVE

ACCEPTING THE CHALLENGE

“And Jesus, when He came out, saw a great multitude and was moved with compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd...” (Mark 6:34)

Jesus fed this multitude out of compassion that He felt for them. He really meant for the Disciples to feed them! Jesus discovered that they didn't have the power of will, emotion or mind to feed those people. They complained about environment and conditions.

Now what if these disciples had accepted the challenge to feed those five thousand men plus women and children? They would have changed history. The account would have followed them wherever they went. Who knows what might have resulted in terms of the impact of their message in the days following Christ's Crucifixion and Resurrection and the beginning of the early church!

However, through unbelief and fear, they backed away and Jesus Himself made history! But this was an emergency moment for twelve disciples. They had already seen miracles of every kind; they had even seen the dead raised. But because they did not have the material substance in their hands, they refused to believe, and they failed in their encounter with an emergency.

The challenge for us today is to hear God speaking to the Church, saying, “Give the world's hungry something to eat.”

If Christians around the world rallied to those words of Jesus, think what the impact could be to a watching world!

What a golden opportunity!

It's one thing to bring God's Love to the lost, but when a man's stomach is in pain because he is so terribly hungry, and when his wife is so weak she can barely sit up, and when their children who are left are nothing but skin and bones, it's awfully hard for people like that to hear the Gospel. The challenge is for God's people to become God's Word for these victims of hunger and poverty.

We do it by giving and going. All of us can give something, some can give more than others; and some of us can go. We can give them food to nourish their bodies, to strengthen them and help them regain their health, and we can leave behind the tangible means whereby they can sustain themselves. And through our pastor contacts we can have the assurance that they will be ministered to spiritually as well.

Call to Action: “Hunger is not a problem. It is an obscenity. How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world.” (Anne Frank, Holocaust victim)

Fact: Almost two in three people lacking access to clean water survive on less than \$2 a day. ⁵⁵

FIFTY-SIX

WILL WORLD HUNGER END?

“No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.” (Luke 16:13)

The question is often asked, “Will hunger as a world problem ever end?” There are many world organizations, economists, agriculturalists and specialists of all kinds who do nothing but study this issue seeking ways to end the hunger problem. And progress has been and is being made. There is no scarcity of perspectives, approaches, and thinking on the problem of the persistence of hunger. These varying points of view have generated many policies, projects and experiments for eradicating hunger. There is already in place a wealth of expertise and knowledge that has substantially advanced the cause of the hungry.

How is the existence of hunger measured? The most widely accepted standard of measurement is called the IMR (Infant Mortality Rate). This is done by measuring the number of infants per thousand who are born alive and who die before their first birthday. Hunger is considered chronic, persistent society-wide problem when the IMR of a country is greater than fifty—meaning more than fifty children per thousand die in the first year of their life.

The countries which have succeeded in bringing their IMR below fifty are, for the most part, as expected, those countries that are considered “developed”, meaning North America, Europe, and parts of Asia and Latin America. Not surprisingly, hunger persists as a basic issue in every African country with a population greater than one million. But, in 1900, this was true for every country in the world.

Call to Action: It has been said by authorities that the end of hunger is a possibility, but not a promise. Hunger is something that CAN end but that is not the same as saying that it WILL end.

Fact: Four million newborns world-wide are dying in the first month of life. ⁵⁶

FIFTY-SEVEN

WHAT HAS WORKED AND WHAT IS MISSING

“Have I not wept for him who was in trouble? Has not my soul grieved for the poor?” (Job 30:25)

What are some of the things that have worked to help bring an end to hunger as a national program in various countries? Basically, it has been a combination of pioneering medical, educational, and developmental activities, including a wide range of agricultural techniques. Basic preventive-health measures (immunization programs, clean-water supplies), and nutrition-improving measures were used. Additional successful measures included; increasing basic education and literacy; redistribution of wealth, land and power; promoting industrial development; increasing agricultural production; and improving food distribution, storage and delivery systems.

There is no single prescribed way of achieving the end of hunger in a society. Some countries have focused on land reform (transferring land ownership to the poor), others have accomplished food subsidies, collectivized agriculture or privately owned “family farms”. There is a growing consensus that we already have the necessary resources, technology and know-how to end hunger but will it happen?

But there is general agreement that what is missing in the global effort to end hunger is commitment; a commitment to actually insure that what can be done shall be done. Commitment is considered the missing ingredient.

The secular world is admitting it. I believe it is time the Christian world admits it also. Commitment is an important word in the vocabulary of a Christian. Nothing great has ever been achieved without commitment.

Call to Action: The question is in order: to what or who are you committed?

Fact: Undernourishment negatively affects people’s health, productivity, sense of hope and overall well being. A lack of food can stunt growth, slow thinking, sap energy, hinder fetal development and contribute to mental retardation. ⁵⁷

FIFTY-EIGHT

“THERE WILL BE FAMINES AND TROUBLES”

“For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be earthquakes in various places, and there will be famines and troubles. These are the beginning of sorrows.” (Mark 13:8)

Jesus said the days preceding His second-coming would be ushered in by many signs. When you hear of nations rising against nations, and kingdoms rising against kingdoms, do you think of the approaching end of this world? What have we witnessed in Africa (and other continents)?

Kingdoms are territorial units within a country. Jesus said this would happen, and that there would be famines and troubles. Man’s inhumanity to man. SIN. The curse of hunger is a result of Satan using food deprivation as a means of tormenting the human race.

Will hunger end? Man may speculate about this, but the Bible supplies the answer. The ancient Hebrew prophet Joel foresaw a time when whole nations would be scrapping for a scrap of bread for their people. He speaks of it as “the day of the Lord”. (Joel 1:15-20) Succeeding passages tell of the pain of the people whose “faces shall gather blackness” (Joel 2:6). “Blackness” of the face occurs when famine strikes and hunger’s effects are ravishing the body.

Elsewhere, as in Jeremiah 4:28 and Lamentations 4:8-10, black is indicative of famine scourging as a blighting plague. In prophesying of the siege and defeat of Jerusalem, the prophet spoke of the people appearing “blacker than soot”.

Bible teachers are in agreement, the black horse of Revelation 6:5-6, is famine. Famine is described in that passage as one of the six seal judgments of the end days. In fact, it is spoken of as being the third seal. I think we had better pay attention.

We applaud any and every effort to eradicate hunger, and we are committed to doing all we can to ease the anguish and pain of suffering humanity. We will continue to minister in Jesus’ Name wherever and whenever we can worldwide.

Call to Action: There is a consistent theme in the Bible that shows God’s love for the poor and downtrodden. God is not partial but He is just.

Fact: In Southeast Asia, women supply up to 90% of the labor required for rice cultivation. ⁵⁸

FIFTY-NINE

POLAND EXPERIENCE

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has appointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor, He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed.” (Luke 4:18)

We went to Poland in the fall of 1988 to deliver food and minister to the people. I had been in central Poland, in the mid-1930s when Howard Carter, veteran English missionary, and I traveled from one country to another in crude Russian springless wagons over hole-pocked, bumpy roads and cobblestone streets. Sometimes we nearly froze from the icy rain and bad weather. The poverty of the people was so readily apparent, but God’s presence was so very real in the meetings. Some of the people we were told came to our meetings having walked 65 miles in the snow, some wearing shoes made from strips of bark from willow trees, and stockings made of rags wrapped around their legs. We slept with the people in their poor farmhouses, and had the lice to prove it. The food was beyond description, but all that is nothing when you can be a blessing to even one of God’s children.

Poland was the home then of a few million of Abraham’s descendents. These Polish Jews were easily identifiable with their long beards, little black caps, and quaint dress. We could not know then the fate of these beautiful Polish people, that in a few years, the Nazis would rain destruction on the land, torture, kill and take the people captive. It was far different from the Poland that was to emerge after the enormous destruction and suffering that took place during World War II.

In January 1982, Poland was in its second month of martial law, and by a single stroke of a general’s pen the price of food was trebled, and in some instances it was quadrupled. Newsweek magazine, January 25, 1982, characterized Poland as “a nation awash in black”. These poles were being visited by the “black horse of famine”. When I was there on this last trip I couldn’t help asking, “Will it happen again?”

“Will the Polish people experience more suffering as a result of this black course at some point in the future? Will there be any place on the face of the earth that isn’t touched by this black horse and its rider?”

Call to Action: Laudatory as are the efforts to eradicate hunger-and such efforts must always continue, and Christian donor organizations must seek to do all they can-but I repeat, laudatory as are such efforts, the Black Horse is running throughout the earth.

Fact: Most all behavioral, emotional, and academic problems were prevalent in hungry children, and aggression and anxiety had the strongest degree of association with hunger. ⁵⁹

SIXTY

BIBLICAL ETHICS AND CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

“In everything give thanks for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” (1Thess. 5:18)

Paul the apostle warned that godless behavior will characterize the last days and he included unthankfulness. God is not pleased with ungrateful people. There is plenty of biblical evidence to support my statement from the Old all the way through the New Testament. The apostle Paul, in writing to the Christians at Thessalonica, and speaking of the Lord’s return, told them how to behave and what to do and he emphasized this need to be thankful.

Have Christians been faithful to biblical revelation? Have the teachings of the Bible been faithfully taught? Are they being practiced?

I have said before that blanket generalizations are unwise. So when I say that I do not believe the standards of social justice set down for us in the Scriptures have been applied in our contemporary society, I am running the risk of offending some of God’s people. Some of you reading this have sought to live out their lives in obedience to the revealed will of God. I am not speaking of you. But there has been and is great sinful neglect of the needy and an almost total disregard for what the Bible teaches by multitudes of people who call themselves Christians. Let me be quick to point out that the Bible does not necessarily charge the “haves” of this world with direct oppression on the “have-nots”, but it points out with painful clarity how the needy have been oppressed by the failure of those who have it within their power to make their lives better. So when I tell you that the God who loves the poor is angry with those who neglect them, your argument is with God, not me. More than 60% of Americans are overweight; it totals more than 1.5 billion pounds of blubber and we could well do without it. Canadians weigh too much also; more than 100,000,000 pounds. We know very little about sacrifice, suffering and doing without. We are living sumptuously in comparison to much of the world.

Call to Action: There are famines and places of the world that we could fly to overnight. The Bible says there will be famines in diverse places, meaning many places (see Mark 13:8).

Fact: Research shows that providing in- school meals, mid-morning snacks, and take- home rations through school feeding programs can alleviate short-term hunger, increase children’s abilities to concentrate, learn, perform specific tasks, and has been linked to an increase in the enrollment of girls.⁶⁰

SIXTY-ONE

THE LORD OF HISTORY HAS A WORD ABOUT THIS

“Therefore, O King, let my counsel be acceptable to you; break off your sins by being righteous, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor.” (Daniel 4:27)

There is an account in the Old Testament of the destruction of Sodom that we usually associate with one thing—we blame their gross sexual perversions. The prophet Ezekiel was told by God to confront Jerusalem with her detestable practices, prostitution and promiscuity. This he did, and in pointing to all this, the prophet goes on to say that Jerusalem copied the ways of her sister city, Sodom: “Now this was the sin of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters were arrogant, overfed and unconcerned; they did not help the poor and needy. They were haughty and did detestable things before me. Therefore I did away with them.” (Ezekiel 16:49-50 NIV)

We remember Sodom’s sexual misconduct; we forget her sinful unconcern for the poor. Sodom was “arrogant, overfed and unconcerned”—I say to you, our thinking as Christians needs an overhaul.

Why does famine persist? Why will it persist into the future? Because we are basically quite indifferent to the plight of so much of the rest of the world as we bask in our creature comfort. Christians worldwide have failed in responding to clear biblical mandates on how to treat the hungry, the poor, and the needy.

The writer of Proverbs declared that, “He who is kind to the poor lends to the Lord” (Proverbs 19:17 NIV). It is another way of saying that pity for the poor is to identify with them in their circumstances.

God’s kindness to the poor and oppressed is seen at the time of the Exodus when he freed the people from their Egyptian taskmasters. He used a man to end this suffering and injustice. That man was Moses. The importance of the human instrumentality is seen. God is concerned that oppressed people know him as a deliverer. Moses-like men and women are needed today help liberate the poor.

Call to Action: The God revealed in the Bible can clearly be seen as the Liberator of the needy and oppressed.

Fact: The 2010-2011 hunger emergency in Somalia resulted in women carrying skeletal babies for hundreds of miles to find food in refugee camps—a famine which the Famine Early Warning Systems Network failed for lack of swift response. There is still no accurate count of those who died, including young children by the tens of thousands. ⁶¹

SIXTY-TWO

WOE TO THOSE WHO TURN ASIDE FROM THE NEEDY

“Hear this word, you cows [women] of Bashan on Mount Samaria, you women who oppress the poor and crush the needy and say to your husbands, ‘bring us some drinks!’” (Amos 4:1 NIV)

God will not tolerate mistreatment of the poor forever. That is the explosive message of the Old Testament prophets. To look at the books of Amos, Hosea, Micah, Isaiah and Jeremiah is to hear God thundering out his anger through these prophets at the injustices foisted upon the poor. It was to become the downfall of the chosen people in the northern kingdom; it was to send him into captivity at the hands of the Assyrians.

There were shocking extremes of wealth and poverty even as there is today. Hosea, who was a contemporary of Amos, spoke of the people teaching and never having enough (Hosea 4:10). He refers to their idolatry and economic exploitation of the poor. They were faithless and merciless. The southern kingdom of Judah experienced the same fate. Isaiah prophesied to them, attacking their social ills, recognizing them as symptoms of spiritual declension (Isaiah 1:3-9; 58:6-10). They bragged about their fasting and praying, but Isaiah was quick to point out the falsity in their acts, telling them the kind of fast God wanted was for them to share their bread with the hungry, to bring to their houses the poor, to cover the nakedness of those who had nothing (Isaiah 58:7-8).

Isaiah unflinchingly declared “woes” on those who decreed unrighteous decrees and who robbed the needy of justice (Isaiah 10:1-2). The prophet Micah did the same (Micah 2:1-2). Love and concern for the world and oppressed is central to the very nature of God.

The Psalms and Proverbs show us God’s concern for the world, the hungry, and the needy. To show kindness to the needy is to honor God (Proverbs 14:31; Proverbs 22:9; Proverbs 28:27 NIV).

In speaking of the virtuous woman, the writer says: “she extends her hand to the poor, yes; she reaches out her hands to the needy.”(Proverbs 31:20)

Psalms 41:1-2 speaks of the blessedness that comes to those who consider the needs of the poor; Psalm 112 contrasts the blessings of the righteous that have regard for others, and the judgment that will befall the wicked.

Call to Action: The Bible is clear in setting forth the responsibility of those who have toward those who have not. The implication for us, living as we are the end times, calls for a compassionate response. (1 John 3:17-18 AMP)

Fact: In the United States, 15% of the population was living in poverty in 2011 and a quarter of all children live in households that experience hunger. ⁶²

SIXTY-THREE

JESUS IDENTIFIED WITH THE POOR

*“Because I rescued the poor who cried for help, and the fatherless who had none to assist him.”
(Job 29:12)*

In the New Testament, as we are introduced to God in the flesh, we stand in awe at the passages that portrayed the birth of Jesus. This was God incarnate in the poorest of surroundings, a cattle stall.

Following Mary’s purification (according to the Levitical law), Joseph and Mary took their little son to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with the Law. But they were so poor they couldn’t present a year old lamb, instead they brought two turtledoves (or pigeons; see Luke 2:24; compare with Leviticus 12:6-8).

The incarnation of Jesus more than anything shows us God’s identification with the poor and needy. Jesus didn’t own a home, or have a place to call his own. (Matthew 8:20)

He preached to the poor. (Matthew 11:5) His identification with them was complete in every way. That’s why, as you look at Matthew 25 and you hear those strong words about being hungry and thirsty, you know this is real. This is actually a final judgment scene, surely one of the most magnificent passages in the Bible, a picture of how common kindness, love and concern will affect our standing in eternity.

“Freely you have received”, Jesus told the disciples when he sent them out, telling them not to even take money in their belts, “freely give” (Matthew 10:8). The disciples made some sacrifices to do this. I think the question is in order for us today: what kind of commitment and what kind of sacrifice do we make?

Call to Action: To love the less fortunate in this world, and to share from our resources, is putting our love for God into practice.

Fact: It is estimated that \$3.2 Billion US\$ is needed annually to reach all 66 million hungry school-age children. ⁶³

SIXTY-FOUR

MOTHER TERESA

*“I know that the Lord secures justice for the poor and upholds the cause of the needy.”
(Ps. 140:12)*

Mother Theresa, known for her compassion, acclaimed internationally for her work among the destitute and the dying, spoke of poverty as being “joy”. “Poverty is an offering that we make to God”, this devout lady explained. “I don’t mean that poverty consists of simply not having things. We don’t become rich by having money, property or possessions. That isn’t the question. What is poverty? Poverty is freedom so that what I possess doesn’t hold me down, so that my possessions don’t keep me from sharing or giving of myself”. I believe this is what Jesus had in mind-being at His complete disposal, unhindered by the cares of this world, offering ourselves to Him in devoted love.

Love like this transforms into deeds, letting Jesus lived through our lives. For love to function best, it needs to start at home where you live; where you work; where you worship. To radiate Christ’s love around us means that the light of his love will be extended like the ripples cast by a pebble into a pond.

Mother Teresa speaks of Christ as being in the “distressing disguise of the poor”. To turn our backs on the poor and hungry of this world is to turn our backs on Christ.

I first encountered the terrible plight of the poor on my around the world trip with Howard Carter in the great cosmopolitan city of Manchuria. We found Russians, Germans, Polish, Japanese and Chinese, besides some English-speaking people. I shall never forget what we saw. It was bitter cold; the river was frozen to a depth that large trucks were able to pass over on the ice. People were lying along the street dead, frozen to death. Beggars had stolen their clothes, while others had kicked them to one side to let the traffic pass. Beggar women, sometimes with the child in their arms, could be seen on the street two-thirds naked, shaking with cold and dying with hunger, screaming to the passers-by for a few pennies with which to buy opium. I was a very young man in those days, but the memory of those sights and others I encountered in India and elsewhere have stayed with me.

Call to Action: Because the Bible is so full of examples of God’s compassion for the needy, how much more we need to pay attention and work in getting our “arteries of compassion” unclogged.

Fact: Droughts, floods, and other disasters that endanger millions of people at a time are increasingly common. The 2010-2011 drought was the Horn of Africa’s worst since 2000. Only a year later, drought in Africa’s Sahel region, the third in 8 years, affected 18 million people. Malnutrition rates that were already extremely high, particularly among young children, rose sharply and more than 1 million children are currently suffering from acute malnutrition.⁶⁴

SIXTY-FIVE

GOD CHOSE POOR FOLK

“If a man with gold rings and fine clothing comes into your assembly, and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in, and you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing and say, ‘have a seat here, please,’ while you say to the poor man, ‘stand there’, or, ‘sit at my feet.’ Have you not made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? Has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which he has promised to those who love him?” (James 2:1-7)

It should be noted that the early church was mostly comprised of the poor. There might be some Christians reading this who would find it difficult to identify with those early Christians. The apostle Paul pointed to the kind of people who were drawn into the circle of that early church (1 Corinthians 1:26-29).

Paul said that God had chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are mighty, and the foolish things of the world to shame the wise.

What are some of those foolish things? In the Old Testament we find a bleeding lamb (Exodus 12), a smitten rock (Exodus 17), a brass snake (Numbers 21).

What are some of those weak things? A rod to defeat the Egyptians (Exodus 4), a sling to defeat a mighty giant (1 Samuel 17), a bone to defeat the Philistines (Judges 15).

Never forget it, at both the Exodus and the emergence of the early church God chose poor folk.

Someone might point out that Abraham was not poor, Moses lived at Pharaoh’s court for 40 years, Luke was a doctor, and other examples of wealth appear in the Bible, nevertheless, there is an obvious contrast between God’s ways and ours. God is not impressed with wealth, size, power or status.

Consider the disciples. Matthew was a Jewish tax collector for the Roman government. No doubt this position afforded him status and money. Luke was the “beloved physician” (Colossians 4:14), and a close friend and companion of Paul. But these were the only two who might have had any financial means at all. God chose these more lowly men to be His special instruments of proclaiming the good news of the gospel, and it is this evidence of His special concern for all those who are just ordinary people.

There is a consistent theme in the Bible that shows God’s love for the poor.

Call to Action: Of the 36 recorded miracles of Jesus during his earthly ministry; six of these were related to feeding the hungry.

Fact: Economically, the effort of constantly securing food consumes valuable time and energy, allowing poor people less time for work and earning income. ⁶⁵

SIXTY-SIX

GOD'S PEOPLE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

“Arise from your bed; cry out in the night, at the beginning of the watches. Pour out your heart like water before the face of the Lord; lift up your hands toward Him for the life of your young children, who faint with hunger at the corner of every street.” (Lam. 2:19 AMP)

When God spoke to me in Jerusalem, he said that strong laymen were waiting for a big project to which they could joyfully give themselves without reservation. We have developed parallel programs for men and women in local churches. Men and women are challenged to pray and fast, to organize rallies, and establish local fellowships. Through your local church you can participate in specific areas of ministry that are of most concern and interest to you. Many ideas are shared with members at local meetings-things you can do individually or as a group to provide resources to feed the hungry.

Our primary goal is to provide for the family of God throughout the world in their times of hunger. As God's people are fed and nourished physically, they will also be ministered to in their spirits by local pastors. In your willingness to participate, you will manifest the love and compassion of Christ. Because of your selfless sacrifice, we believe that you will see and experience the blessing of God in your own life.

Specifically, the men of the LeSEA Global Feed the Hungry program are organizing men of all nations to assist in fighting famine, building the local church into a tower of strength, and taking a harvest of lost souls from the devil.

By their God-given natures, women are uniquely endowed with tenderhearted qualities-they hurt when they see and hear about need. Their hearts are touched when they consider the plight, the tears and agony of millions of mothers weeping because they cannot feed their children. God assured me that the women of the Feed the Hungry program would be a formidable strength serving the needy in the body of Christ around the world.

We cannot feed 1 billion starving people without prayer. The Lord has set a challenge before us that all God's people and participating through praying, fasting and giving. Those who for health reasons cannot fast can pray and contribute the cost of two meals to feed the hungry.

It is time that the church recognizes her God-given responsibility to come to the aid of the poor and downtrodden.

Call to Action: If tears are the vocabulary of the anguished soul, then we who claim to be God's people must hear their cries and take upon ourselves their heartbreak and do what we can to dry those tears.

Fact: More than half of the world's 870-925 million starving and mal-nourished people live in rural areas and depend on agriculture for their livelihoods. The crisis of 2007-2008 drove an additional 100 million people into poverty. ⁶⁶

CONCLUSION

Famine, starvation, poverty, lack of water clean or otherwise, improper sanitation, and other devastation and death created by natural and man-made disasters, cultural and political warfare and many more causes have been well accounted by Dr. Lester Sumrall in the preceding pages. Television and high-speed electronic Internet bring daily images of the gaunt faces and emaciated bodies of starving children, widows, orphans, and of the cruelty of man to his own brothers and sisters on planet Earth. Christians can and must make a difference by being committed to action. God's love for the poor is well documented but just to know it and acknowledge it is not enough. God does not expect us to merely accept it, but rather has called us to identify with it and make a real difference. If the Christian Church will recognize her Theological obligation to engage and deliver by less discussion and programming replaced with determination and actionable commitment, perhaps then will the very possible eradication of hunger become a reality.

That is why we are feeding the hungry, body and soul.

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