

Help the Needy

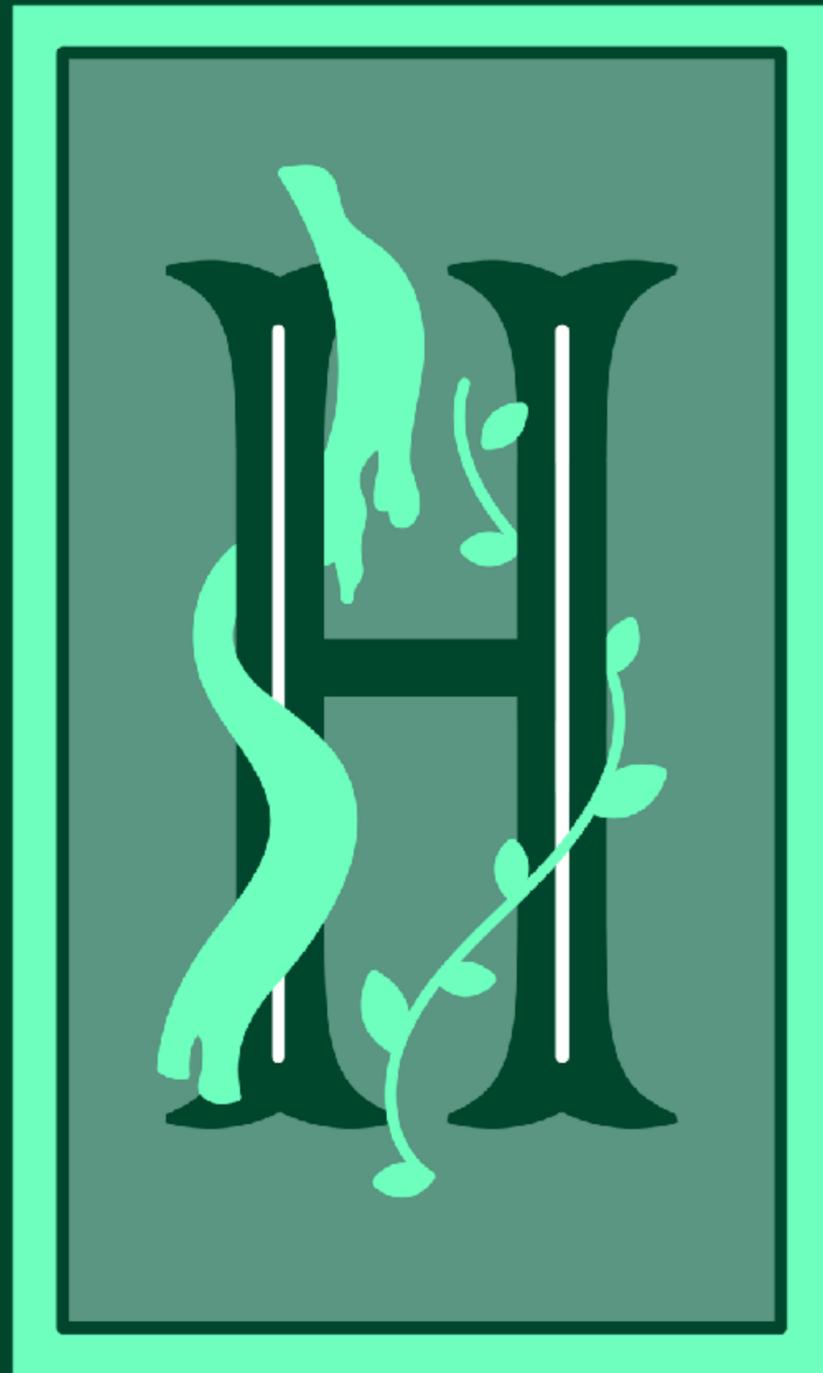
*Faith & Flourishing in Politics:
Christian Education Discussion*

Rev. Jonathan M. Romig - Fall 2021

Our Garden Hedge:

1. **Listen Well** - We don't have all the answers so let's ask what others think, really try to hear each other out, and let others finish their thoughts.
2. **Speak with Brevity & Focus** - Let's leave space for others to participate and stay on track ("Keep to our hedge").
3. **Practice Gentle Courage** - Let's be bold and share our thoughts and ideas, point to what we believe the Scripture and wisdom says, and yet do so with a gentle and humble spirit.
4. **Keep Praying** - Let's pray for the Holy Spirit to be present and to bear fruit through our discussion.





What does the Bible have to say about the poor and needy?



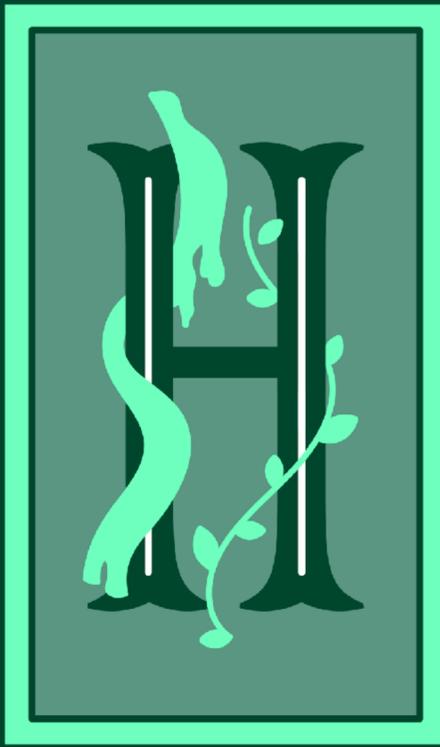
What does the Bible have to say about the poor and needy?

The Old Testament prophets often spoke of God's requirement to take care of the poor and needy.

Proverbs 31:8-9 (ESV)

Open your mouth for the mute,
for the rights of all who are destitute.

Open your mouth, judge righteously,
defend the rights of the poor and needy.



Isaiah 58:6-8 (ESV)

6 “Is not this the fast that I choose:
to loose the bonds of wickedness,
to undo the straps of the yoke,
to let the oppressed go free,
and to break every yoke?

7 Is it not to share your bread with the hungry
and bring the homeless poor into your house;
when you see the naked, to cover him,
and not to hide yourself from your own flesh?

8 Then shall your light break forth like the dawn,
and your healing shall spring up speedily;
your righteousness shall go before you;
the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard.



What does the Bible have to say about the poor and needy?

Zechariah 7:9-10 (ESV)

“Thus says the Lord of hosts, Render true judgments, show kindness and mercy to one another, do not oppress the widow, the fatherless, the sojourner, or the poor, and let none of you devise evil against another in your heart.”

Categories: widows, orphans, immigrants, poor

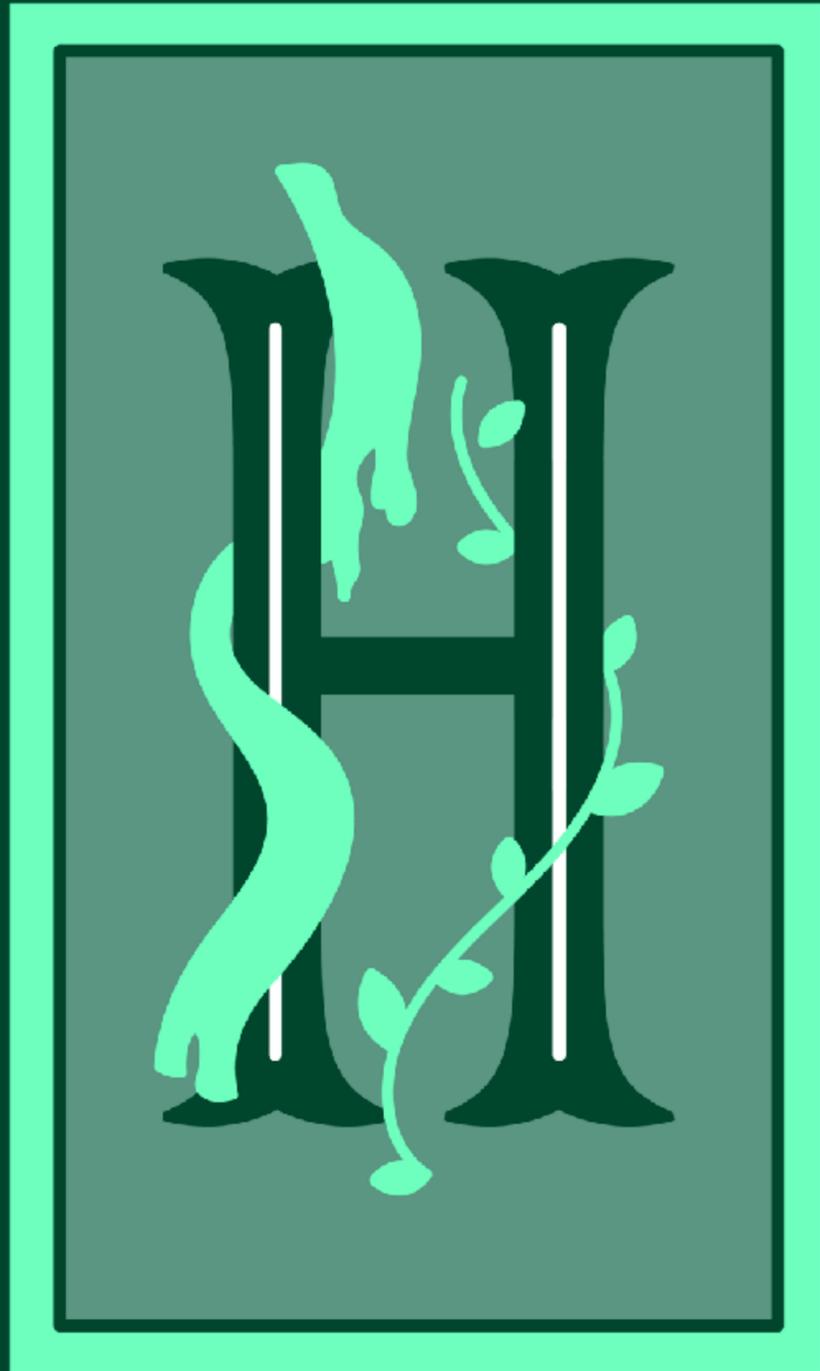


What does the Bible have to say about the poor and needy?

James 2:15-18 (ESV)

If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, 16 and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and filled,” without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that?

18 But someone will say, “You have faith and I have works.” Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.



How does Jesus
address the poor
and needy?



How does Jesus address the poor and needy?

Matthew 25:37-40 (ESV)

37 Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? 38 And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? 39 And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' 40 And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'



How does Jesus address the poor and needy?

Matthew 25:44-46 (ESV)

Then they also will answer, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?’ 45 Then he will answer them, saying, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.’ 46 And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

Luke 6:20-26 (ESV)

20 And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said:

“Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.

21 “Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you shall be satisfied.

“Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh.

22 “Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you and revile you and spurn your name as evil, on account of the Son of Man!

23 Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers did to the prophets.

24 “But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation.

25 “Woe to you who are full now, for you shall be hungry.

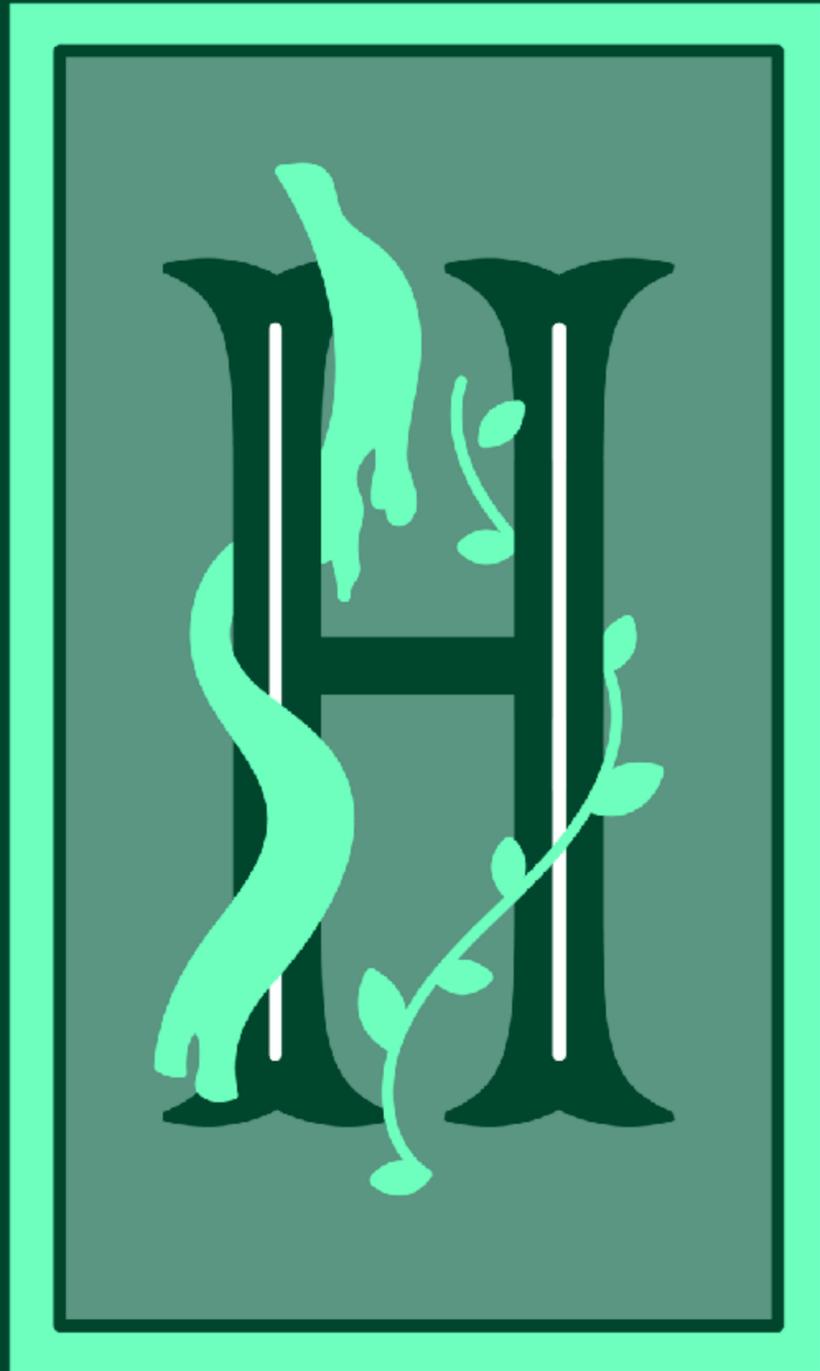
“Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep.

26 “Woe to you, when all people speak well of you, for so their fathers did to the false prophets.

From Luke's Sermon on the Plain, we can make some initial conclusions about the politics of Jesus. He was an advocate for the poor and the hungry. He cared for those who were sad and shared in their plight. He stood firm with those who were persecuted for being his followers. He was wary of systems that favored the rich while taking advantage of the poor. He challenged his followers to love their enemies, pray for their persecutors, turn the other cheek, and treat others the way they would want to be treated. He opened up the possibility that God's Kingdom will look nothing like the kingdoms of this world.

Clay Stauffer, Preaching Politics: Proclaiming Jesus in an Age of Money, Power, and Partisanship (Danvers, MA: Chalice Press. 2016) chap. 2, Kindle.

What do you think? Agree? Disagree? Too provocative?



What level of responsibility does the church have to the poor and needy?



What level of responsibility does the church have to the poor and needy?

2 Thessalonians 3:10 (ESV)

For even when we were with you, we would give you this command: If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat.

Matthew 19:24 (ESV)

Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.”



What level of responsibility does the church have to the poor and needy?

Proverbs 13:4 (ESV)

The soul of the sluggard craves and gets nothing,
while the soul of the diligent is richly supplied.

See also: Proverbs 20:4; 21:25

Luke 16:25 (ESV)

But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner bad things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish.

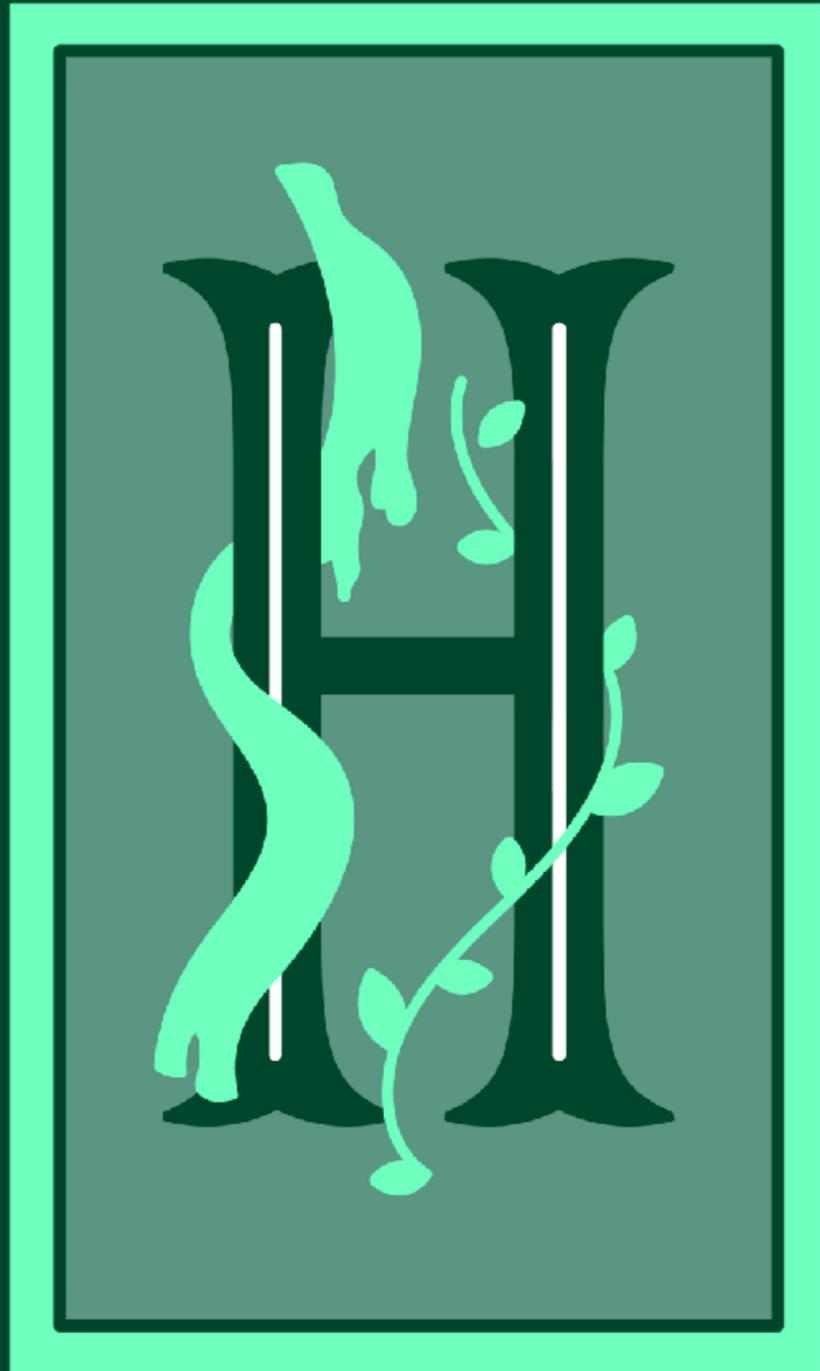


What level of responsibility does the church have to the poor and needy?

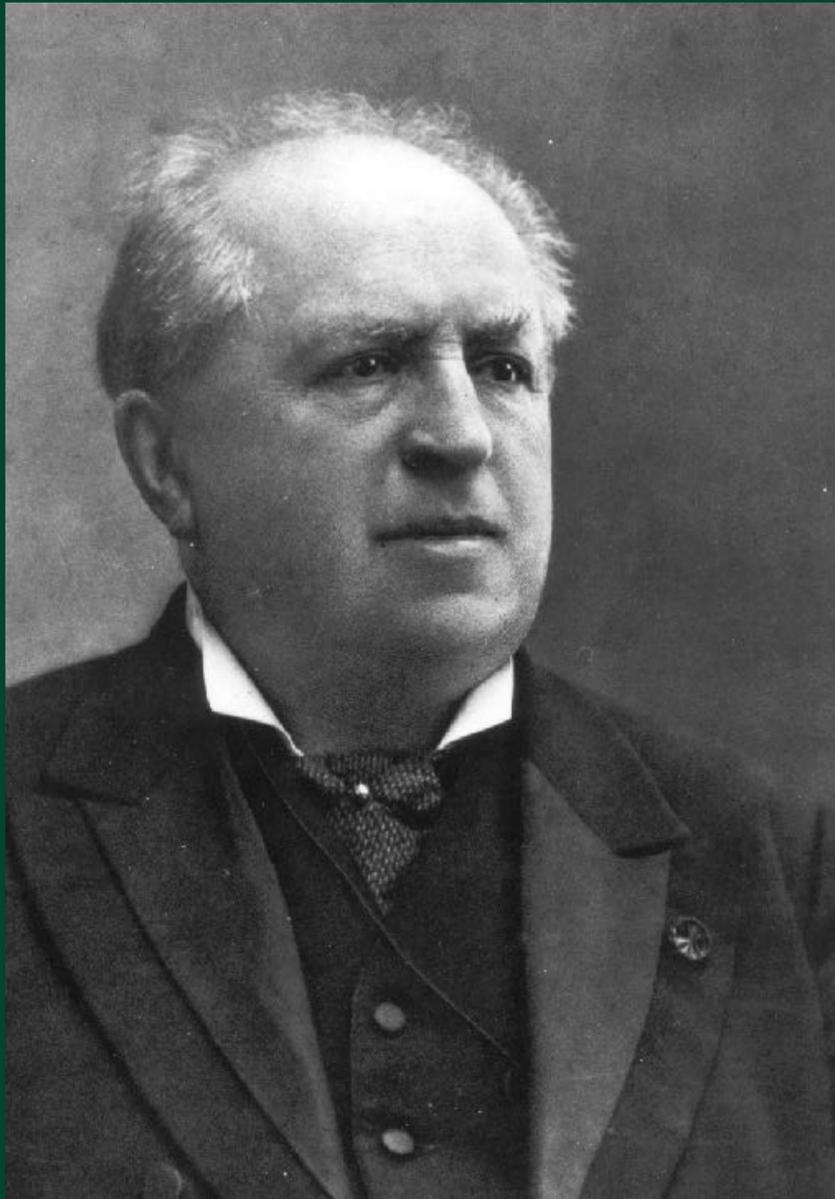
Galatians 6:10 (ESV)

So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.

Some take Galatians 6:10 as the Bible's clearest mandate to take care of the poor and needy outside of the church community. Primacy is given to the church body.



Does our care for
the poor and
needy impact our
gospel witness?
Why or why not?



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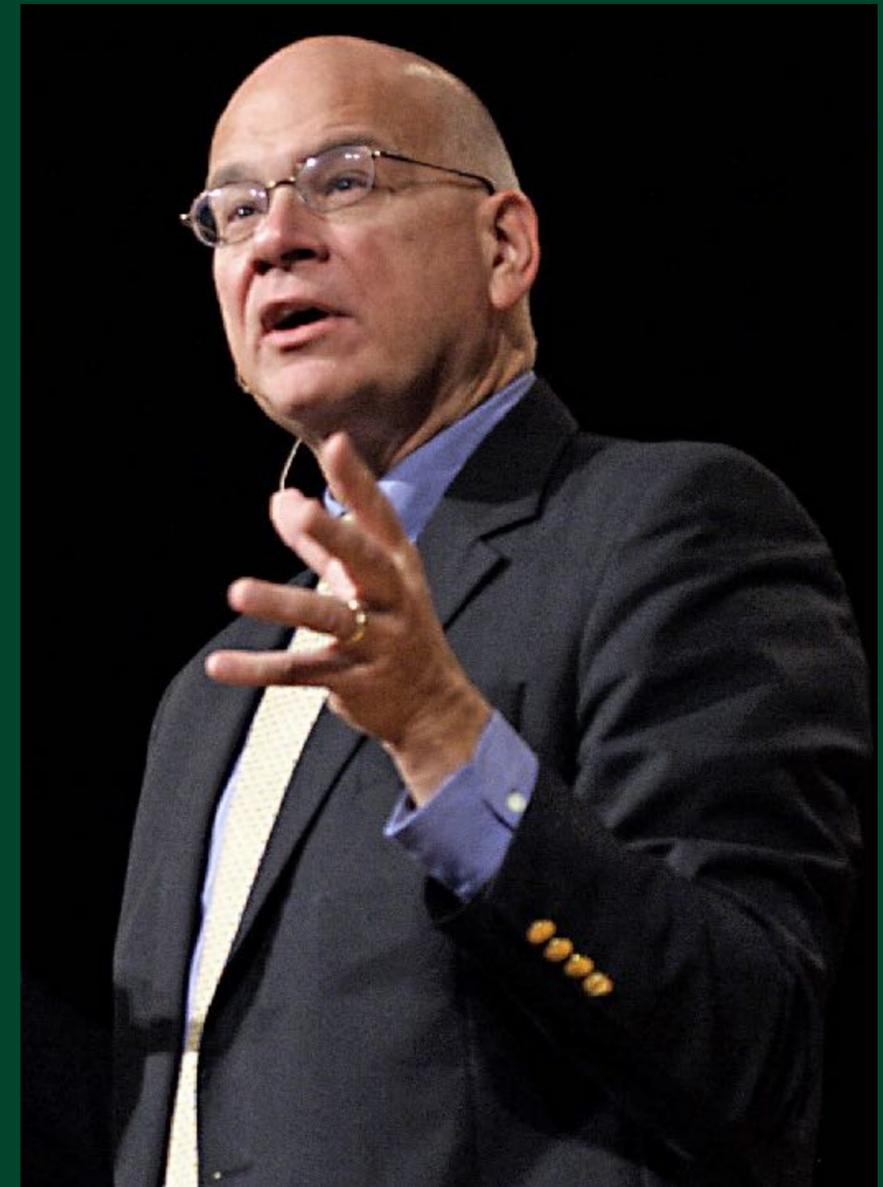
Christians are called to take sides in socio-economic problems. They are called to take the side of the poor, the unemployed or underemployed, and those working in degrading conditions and advocate for better laws and policies. Otherwise, Kuyper warns, non-Christians will hear Christian talk about love but see it strikingly missing from their public and social actions.

Michael R. Wagenman, *Engaging the World with Abraham Kuyper* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2019) chap. 6, Kindle.

What do you think? Agree? Disagree? Something else?

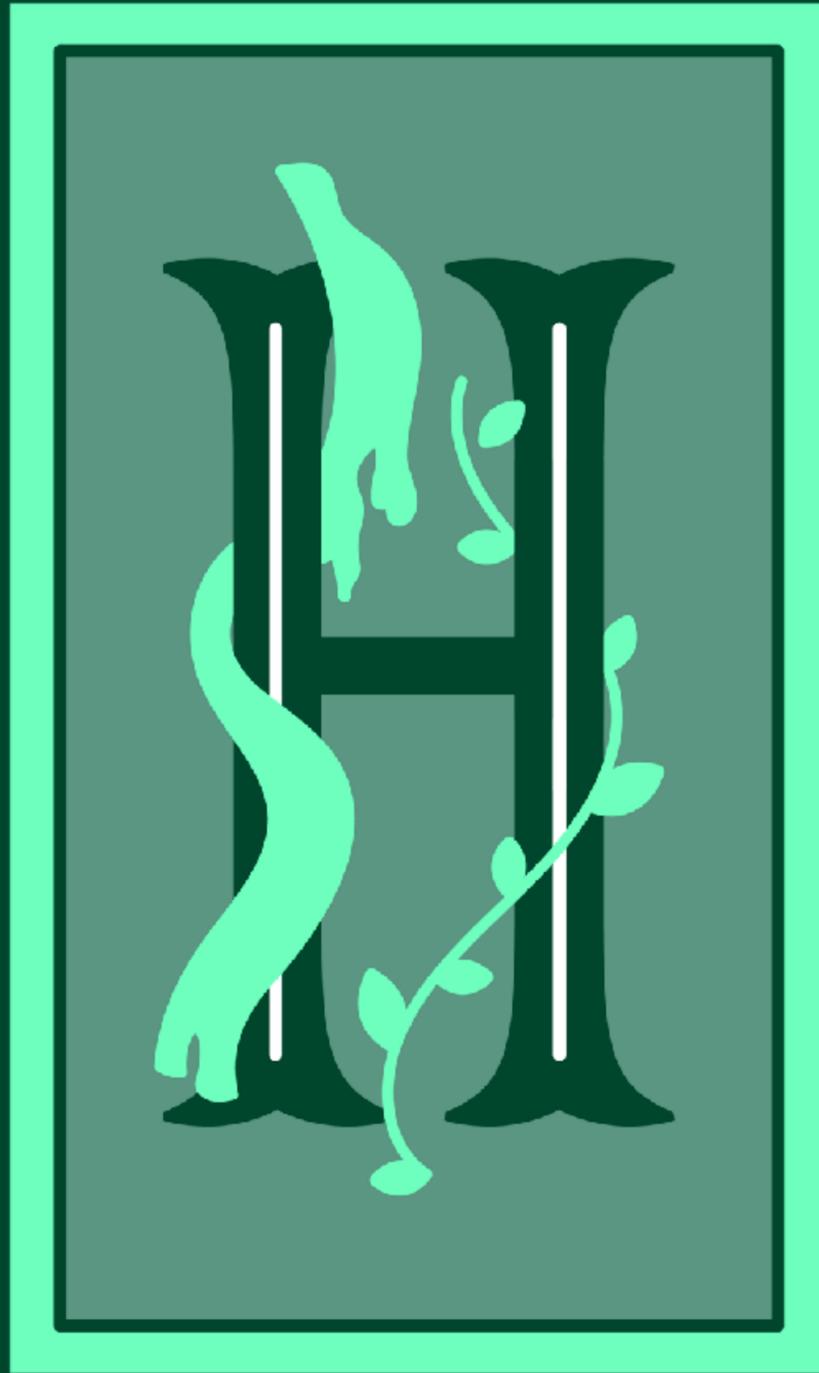
Caring for the poor and the weak became, ironically, a major reason for the cultural influence the church eventually came to wield. If the church does not identify with the marginalized, it will itself be marginalized. This is God's poetic justice.

Timothy Keller, *Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012) 224.



What do you think? Agree? Disagree?

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Should the church
advocate for the
poor in politics? If
so, how?



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The well-respected Bread for the World Institute's analysis on hunger in America "consistently shows that the amount of food provided by government programs dwarfs charitable contributions by more than 9 to 1." When the funding is cut for food stamps and other critical programs, the faith community and nonprofits are overwhelmed with the long lines and new emergency needs.

Jim Wallis, *The (Un)Common Good: How the Gospel Brings Hope to a World Divided* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2014) 249, Kindle.

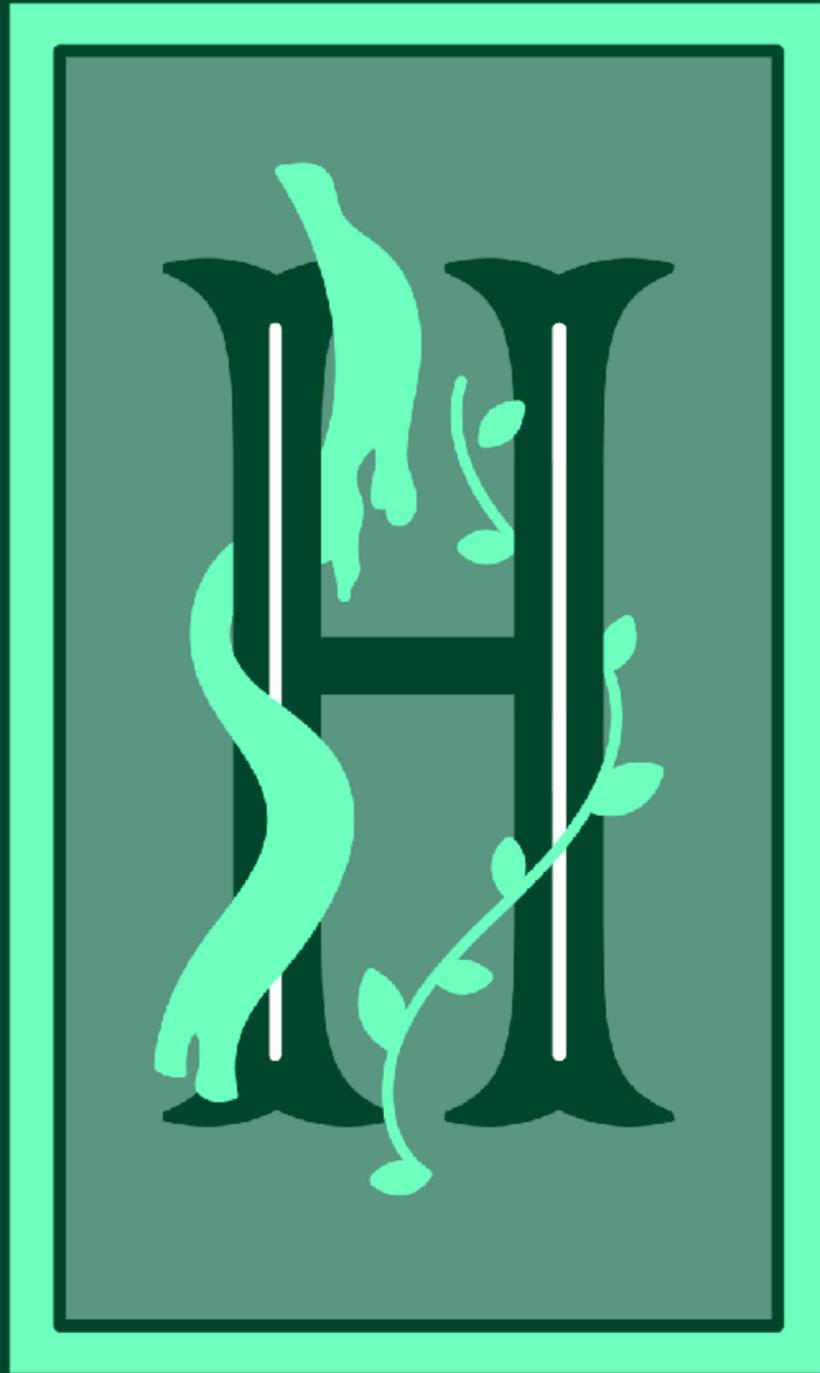
Those most in jeopardy during Washington's debates and decisions are precisely the people the Bible clearly instructs us to protect and care for—the poorest and most vulnerable. In comparison to the power players of the political system, they have virtually no one lobbying on their behalf in these hugely important discussions about how public resources will be allocated.

As one of Washington's most influential political insiders told me, “If it wasn't for the constant and consistent pressure of you and your faith colleagues, those low-income people would not have been protected, because there are no champions for the poor in these houses of government.”

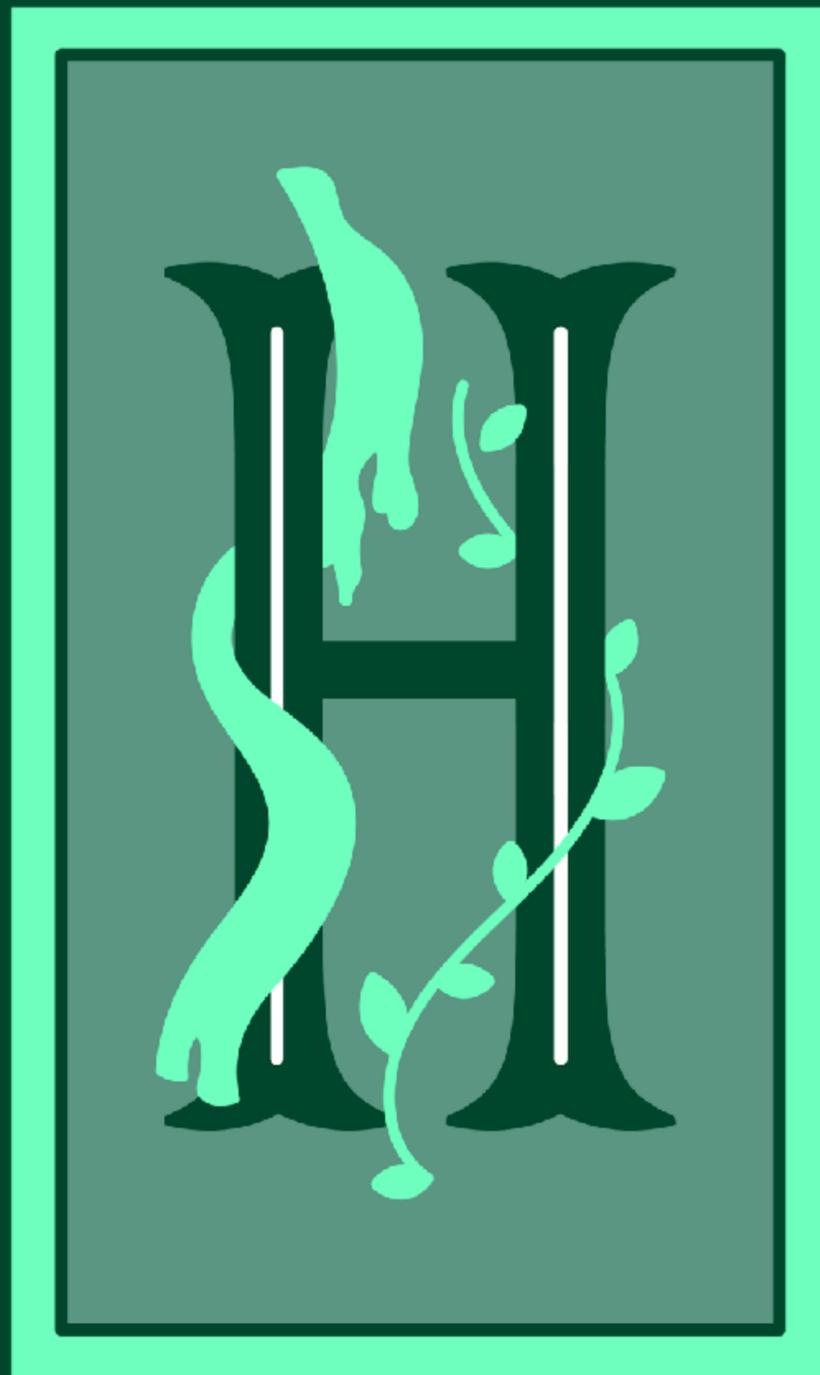
Jim Wallis, *The (Un)Common Good: How the Gospel Brings Hope to a World Divided* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2014) 76, 79, Kindle.

Modernist Christians believed the church was merely a social assistance or humanitarian agency through which the affluent could give handouts to the wretched poor. And cultural Christians believed the church was a safe haven away from the messiness of public, social, and even economic or political action. Instead of these problematic options, Kuyper fought to retain a distinctly Christian social witness against the evils of grueling poverty for the masses at the bottom in light of outrageous wealth and privilege for the few at the top.

Michael R. Wagenman, *Engaging the World with Abraham Kuyper* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2019) chap. 6, Kindle.



How do we help
without hurting?



How does the
gospel redeem
work and poverty?



How does the gospel redeem work and poverty?

Genesis 3:19 (ESV)

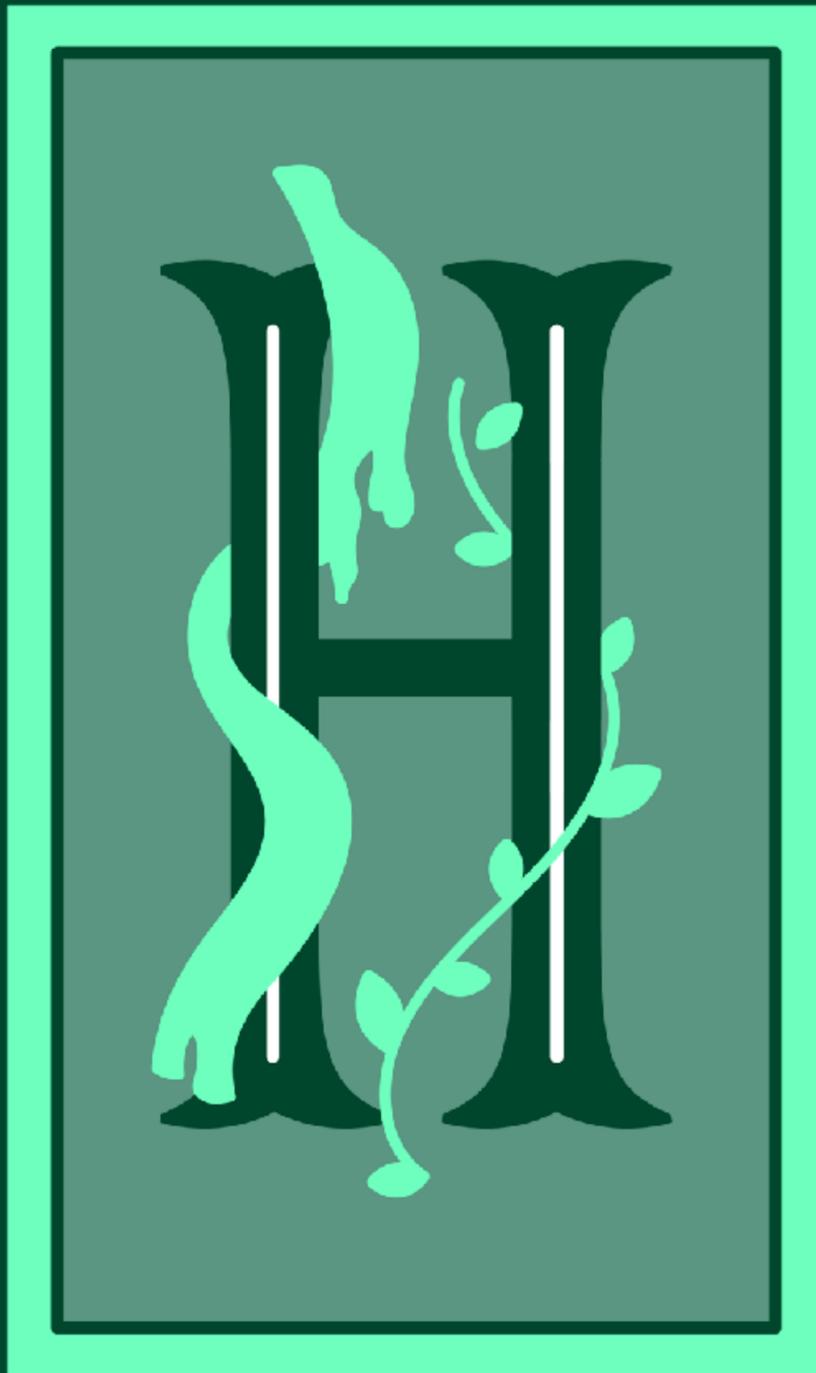
By the sweat of your face
you shall eat bread,
till you return to the ground,
for out of it you were taken;
for you are dust,
and to dust you shall return.”



How does the gospel redeem work and poverty?

Revelation 21:5a (ESV)

And he who was seated on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.”



Let's pray for our church and government officials to help without hurting those in poverty and need.

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