

DISCIPLESHIP COURSE

An Invitation to Follow

PART 12 | CONTINUING | SERVING THE POOR

"The greatest act of love is doing something for someone when you know they can do nothing in return."

THE BIG IDEA

Christianity has always been more than a belief system — it has been a movement that reshapes society. From the very beginning, wherever followers of Jesus went, they served the poor. In a world that said the poor deserved their lot, the church said: come in, be fed, be clothed, be cared for.

This is not a social program — it is a continuation of Jesus' own ministry. He was moved with compassion for the vulnerable and the forgotten. As his disciples, we carry that same calling: to love people with actions and truth, not just words.

KEY SCRIPTURES

1 John 3:17–18

"If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth."

Matthew 25:40

"The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'"

A CHURCH THAT CHANGED HISTORY

Serving the poor is not a modern idea — it has been a defining mark of the church from the very start. Here's a glimpse of what that looked like:

EARLY CHURCH

Turning the Empire

Christians arriving in cities brought poor people into their homes, fed them, clothed them, and cared for the sick — at a time when the poor were considered responsible for their own suffering.

AD 303–323

Persecution to Acceptance

In just 20 years, Christianity went from its most severe persecution to becoming the religion of the Roman Empire. Many scholars credit the early church's radical care for the poor as a key reason society's hostility turned.

TODAY

Our Continuing Responsibility

From the ancient church to John Wesley's missional services, serving the poor has always been a Christian trademark. That calling hasn't changed — it belongs to us now.

VOICES ACROSS HISTORY







"Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can."

— John Wesley

"If you cannot feed a hundred people, then just feed one."
— Mother Teresa

WHO ARE THE POOR?

"The poor" isn't just one category of person — it encompasses anyone around us who is in need and who we have the means to help. Here are some faces of poverty we might encounter:

 The homeless People living on the streets in every city — visible, overlooked, and in need of practical care.	 The single parent A mum or dad doing it alone — sometimes unable to cover groceries, bills, or basic needs for their children.
 The struggling student A university student living on very little, unable to cover fees or food — someone a meal or a conversation can reach.	 The kid at school A child who can't afford a school camp or excursion — a small gift from you could mean the world to them.
 The global poor Billions of people without clean water, food security, or access to basic healthcare — reached through giving and advocacy.	 The one in front of you Sometimes it's not a category — it's just the person God puts in your path today who needs something you can give.

WHY WE SERVE

It would be easy to serve the poor because it's the right thing to do, or because it makes us feel good, or because it looks like faith in action. But the deepest reason goes further than that:

THE GREATEST ACT OF LOVE

Doing something for someone when you know they can do nothing in return.
This is one-way love. Agape love. Godly love. And it is when God's love is most clearly seen.

When we serve someone who has nothing to offer in return — no influence, no reciprocation, no status — we are imitating the love of God himself. This is agape: unconditional, one-directional, costly love. It is the love Jesus showed on the cross, and the love we are called to carry into the world.

A FINAL THOUGHT

You don't have to start a charity or feed a nation. You just have to notice the one in front of you — and respond. The early church didn't set out to change an empire. They just kept bringing people in, feeding them, and loving them. And the world changed.

"Let us not love with words or speech — but with actions and in truth."
— 1 John 3:18

REFLECTION & DISCUSSION

1. Have you ever experienced someone showing you one-way, no-strings-attached love? What did it feel like — and how did it shape your view of God?

2. Looking at the examples of poverty above, which do you encounter most naturally in your own world? Is there someone specific who comes to mind?

3. John Wesley said to do all the good you can in all the ways you can. What's one practical way you could begin — or deepen — serving the poor this month?

4. How does it change your motivation to serve when you understand it as agape love — love that looks like God's love — rather than charity or obligation?