**"Loving the Poor"**

**Prov. 14:31, James 2:1-7, Deut. 15:11, 1 John 3:16-18**

 ***Overview***  Jesus once famously said “The poor you will always have with you“ (Matthew

26:11). One quick glance at the news headlines and TV commercials of the day

and we are forced to acknowledge the truth of that simple statement.

So where does that leave us? Are we to resign ourselves to the fact that

poverty is a social ill that cannot be eliminated? Perhaps we must make our

peace with that fact and try our best to move on to changing other things.

Or would God have us tackle the problem anyway? In this session we will

consider what God would have us do for “the least of these” as we continue to

strive to be good neighbors to those around us.

***Getting Started*** *The Poor Life*



1. Of all the small (i.e. costing less than $20) comforts that you know of, which one would you miss the most if you could no longer afford it?

2. One of the new trends today is the “tiny house” (houses around 400-600 sq. ft.). Do you think you could live in a tiny house? Why or why not?

3. How affluent would you say your family was when you were growing up? What did you learn from your family’s financial situation and/or the way your parents handled their finances?

***The Text***

16This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. 17If 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? 18Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.



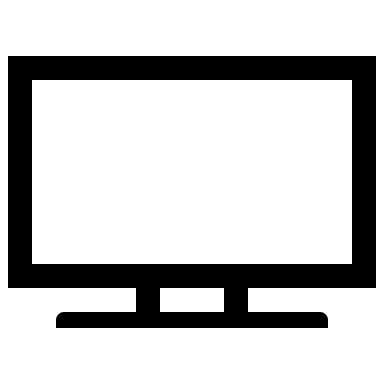
1 John 3:16-18 (NIV)

My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favoritism. 2Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in filthy old clothes also comes in. 3If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, “Here’s a good seat for you,” but say to the poor man, “You stand there” or “Sit on the floor by my feet,” 4have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?

5Listen, my dear brothers and sisters: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him? 6But you have dishonored the poor. Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court? 7Are they not the ones who are blaspheming the noble name of him to whom you belong?

James 2:1-7 (NIV)

***The Video (optional)*** “Loving the Poor” – Prov. 14:31, Deut. 15:11, 1 John 3:16-18 - by Kyle Corbin, Sept. 27/20 (view at www.immanuelonline.ca)



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***Understanding***

1. John is a writer who loves contrasts. What two attitudes is John contrasting in



1 John 3 (vs. 11-15 and vs. 16)? How does John describe the behavior of

people who hold these two attitudes? How are they different?

2. How do we know what love is (according to 1 John 3:16)? John seems to describe the action described in this verse as the supreme example of love. Why do you think that is?

3. What impact should genuine love have on our lives (i.e. what behavior should

result) (1 John 3:17-18)? What are we missing if we lack this kind of love?

What is the spiritual condition of those who do not love in this way

(1 John 3:14, 19-24)?

4. What is the sin that James wants to call out in James 2:1-7? In what way does this sin make us “judges with evil thoughts” (i.e. what thoughts is he referring to)?

5. How does God regard the poor (according to James 2:5-7) (see also Luke 5:27-31, 6:20, 14:12-14, Matt. 19:21)?

6. How does James describe the behavior of the rich in James 2:5-7? Do we still see this kind of behavior today?

***Applying***



1. Can you think of any ways in which we love in “words and speech” but not

“with actions and in truth”? Give some examples.

2. In 1 John 3:16, John refers to laying down our lives for the “brothers and sisters” (plural) but in verse 17 he talks about helping a “brother or sister” (singular). Why do you think he makes this shift?

3. Does John intend for us to physically lay down our lives (i.e. die) for others (1 John 3:16)? If not (or if that is not the only meaning), what are some of

the practical ways in which we can follow this instruction in the coming week?

4. Can you think of any ways in which the church of today may show partiality or favoritism? In its governance? In its ministries? In the behavior of its people?

5. Have you ever felt as if the church was treating you like “a poor person” (as James describes in James 2:1-7)? How did that make you feel about yourself? About God?

6. When you read the passages we are studying today, do you see yourself as

one of the “rich” or one of the “poor”? What implications might your answer have for your walk with Christ in the coming week?

7. Are there ever times when we should choose not to help the poor (see 2 John 10-11, 2 Thess. 3:6-12)?

8. Consider God’s instructions regarding the treatment of the poor (in these passages and in Deut. 15:11, Prov. 14:31). Reflect on the poor you know in your family (1 Tim. 5:8), your church community (Acts 4:32-37), the larger global Christian community (2 Cor. 8:1-7), the non-Christian world (Gal. 6:10), and whomever God has brought into your life (Luke 10:25-37). Who in these various groups will you help in the coming week (and how will you do that (prepare, pray, give, serve, etc.))?

***Memory Verse(s)***

18Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.



1 John 3:18 (NIV)

***Extra Resources***



* *“Loving the Poor” – Prov. 14:31, Deut. 15:11, 1 John 3:16-18* – by Pastor Kyle Corbin (“Immanuel Church” website, Sept. 27, 2020). In this sermon Pastor Kyle explains the Scriptural call for Christians to care for the poor.
* *"How to Handle Panhandlers” –* by John Piper(“Desiring God” website, audio transcript from April 30, 2013). Here’s one perspective from a veteran pastor on an issue we all deal with from time to time.
* *“Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger”* – by Ron Sider (Thomas Nelson, 2015). First written in 1978, Sider updates his classic work and details practical solutions that can help address world poverty and hunger.