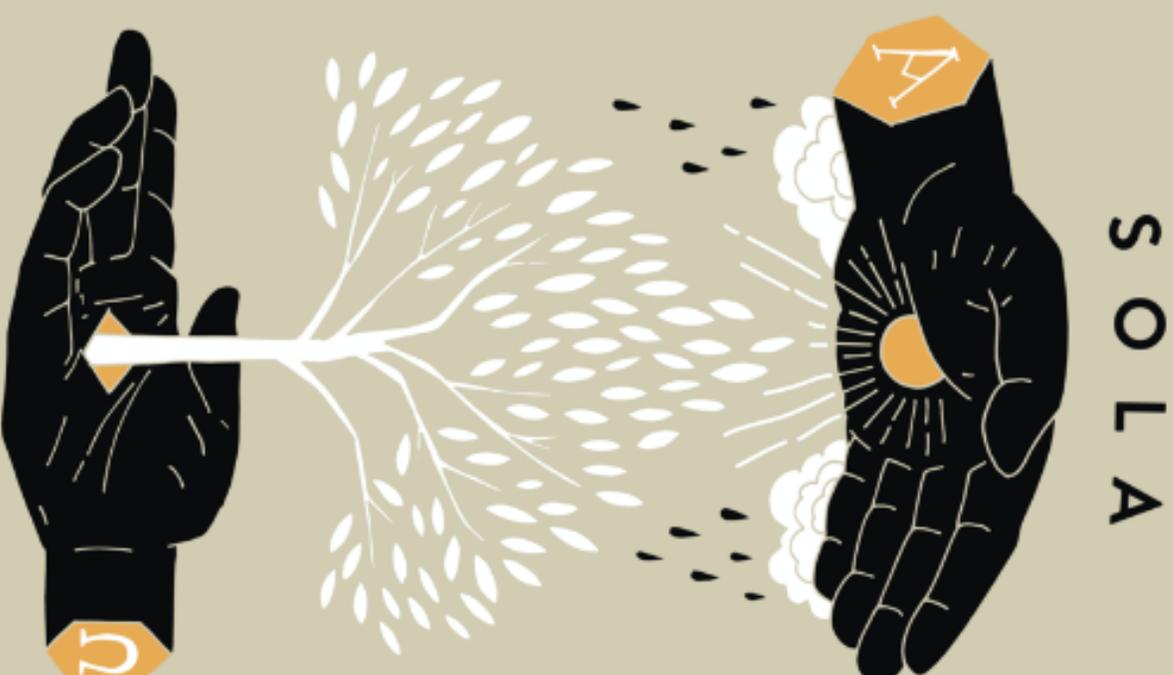


A Sample of the

**OVER 2000  
SCRIPTURES  
CONCERNING  
POVERTY &  
JUSTICE FOR THE  
VULNERABLE:**

the Poor, the Widow, the  
Foreigner and the Fatherless

Williamsburg Christian Church  
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Artwork by Scott Erickson

## **Why God Issues so Many Commands in the Hebrew Scriptures about Four Specific Groupings of People in Israel: the Poor, the Widow, the Foreigner, and the Fatherless**

God is very specific about the poor, the widow, the foreigner, and the fatherless. It isn't because he *values* them more than others. It is because their state of being makes them the most *vulnerable* in their society.

In ancient near eastern societies poverty happened for many reasons. One primary reason is that governing systems of a nation most often worked better for some groups of people than others. In many cases these systems could work against other people. This group of people were defined as those who were "made poor"<sup>1</sup>. They were vulnerable to the wealthy people of privilege and power. In Israel, the privileged and powerful often exploited the poor. But they didn't stop there.

Widows, orphans and foreigners were also vulnerable. The widow and orphan had no one to protect them, especially if they were female.<sup>2</sup> The same is true of the foreigner who would be at a natural disadvantage due to ethnicity and pagan religious commitments.

### **Justice & Righteousness**

In Hebrew Scripture the two words for *justice* and *righteousness* are often connected to these four specific groupings of people.

*Wishpat* (pronounced mish\*pot ), is understood as justice in legal and governmental spheres of civic life, and is often translated "justice," depending on the context of the Scripture. It is used in its various Hebrew forms more than 200 times in the Hebrew Scriptures.

The other word is *tsedeka*, (pronounced said\*e\*kah) which is understood as justice in social and human-to-human spheres of civic life, dealing with how one treat his/her neighbor and fellow human. It is sometimes translated "justice," but most often translated "righteousness," which could literally be called social *right-ness (justice)*, or doing *right (justly)* by your neighbor. It is used in its various forms over 399 times in the Hebrew Scriptures. However, it is overwhelmingly concentrated in the Torah in directing God's people to do right by their fellow human (Genesis, approx. 16 times; Deuteronomy, approx. 18 times; Exodus approx. 4 times; Leviticus approx. 5 times).

*Wishpat* and *tsedek* are paired together over 50 times, mostly in the ministry of the Hebrew prophets. God sent these prophets to be truth-tellers that would remind his people of what it means to faithfully love God and do right by one another, especially the vulnerable among them.

The heart of God has not changed. We see it in the ministry of Jesus. We see it in the life and teachings of the apostles. We see it as a part of God's summons for His Church, if we are to faithfully to participate in his redemptive mission in the world by the Spirit.

## **The Hebrew Scriptures**

"Do not take advantage of a widow or an orphan." Exodus 22:22

If you lend money to my people, to the poor among you, you shall not deal with them as a creditor; you shall not exact interest from them. Exodus 22:25

"Do not deny justice to your poor people in their lawsuits." Exodus 23:6

"During the seventh year, let the land lie unplowed and unused. Then the poor among your people may get food from it, and the wild animals may eat what they leave. Do the same with your vineyard and your olive grove." Exodus 23:11

But if he is poor and cannot afford so much, he shall take one male lamb for a guilt offering to be elevated, to make atonement on his behalf, and one-tenth of an ephah of choice flour mixed with oil for a grain offering and a log of oil; also two turtledoves or two pigeons, such as he can afford, one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering. Leviticus 14:21-22

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

"Do not pervert justice; do not show partiality to the poor or favoritism to the great, but judge your neighbor fairly." Leviticus 19:15

"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 foreigner. I am the LORD your God." Leviticus 23:22

"If one of your countrymen becomes poor and sells some of his property, his nearest relative is to come and redeem what his countryman has sold. . . . If one of your countrymen becomes poor and is unable to support himself among you, help him as you would an foreigner or a temporary resident, so he can continue to live among you. . . . If one of your countrymen becomes poor among you and sells himself to you, do not make him work as a slave." Leviticus 25:25, 35, 39

"If a foreigner or a temporary resident among you becomes rich and one of your countrymen becomes poor and sells himself to the foreigner living among you or to a member of the foreigner's clan, he retains the right of redemption." Leviticus 25:47-48

"For the Lord your God is the God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, mighty, and awesome God, showing no partiality and taking no bribe. He executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner, giving him food and clothing. You also must love the foreigner, since you were foreigners in the land of Egypt. You are to fear Yahweh your God and worship Him. Remain faithful to Him and take oaths in His name. He is your praise and He is your God, who has done for you these great and awesome works your eyes have seen." Deuteronomy 10:17-22

"At the end of every three years, bring all the tithes of that year's produce and store it in your towns, so that the Levites (who have no allotment or inheritance of their own) and the foreigners, the fatherless and the widows who live in your towns may come and eat and be satisfied." Deuteronomy 14:28-29

"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." Deuteronomy 15:4

"If there is a poor man among your brothers in any of the towns of the land that the LORD your God is giving you, do not be hardhearted or tightfisted toward your poor brother." Deuteronomy 15:7

"Be careful not to harbor this wicked thought: The seventh year, the year for canceling debts, is near, so that you do not show ill will toward your needy brother and give him nothing. He may then appeal to the LORD against you, and you will be found guilty of sin." Deuteronomy 15:9

"There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore I command you to be openhanded toward your brothers and toward the poor and needy in your land." Deuteronomy 15:11

Rejoice before Yahweh your God in the place where He chooses to have His name dwell—you, your son and daughter, your male and female slave, the Levite within your gates, as well as the foreigner, the fatherless, and the widow among you. Deuteronomy 16:11

"Do not take advantage of a hired man who is poor and needy, whether he is a brother Israelite or an foreigner living in one of your towns." Deuteronomy 24:14

"Do not deprive the foreigner or the fatherless of justice, or take the cloak of the widow as a pledge." Deuteronomy 24:17

"When you are harvesting in your field and you overlook a sheaf, do not go back to get it. Leave it for the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow, so that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands. When you beat the olives from your trees, do not go over the branches a second time. Leave what remains for the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow. When you harvest the grapes in your vineyard, do not go over the vines again. Leave what remains for the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow." Deuteronomy 24:19-21

"Cursed is the man who withholds justice from the foreigner, the fatherless or the widow.' Then all the people shall say, Amen!" Deuteronomy 27:19

"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." 1 Samuel 2:8

"as the time when the Jews got relief from their enemies, and as the month when their sorrow was turned into joy and their mourning into a day of celebration. He wrote them to observe the days as days of feasting and joy and giving presents of food to one another and gifts to the poor." Esther 9:22

"When daylight is gone, the murderer rises up and kills the poor and needy; in the night he steals forth like a thief." Job 24:14

"because I rescued the poor who cried for help, and the fatherless who had none to assist him." Job 29:12

"Have I not wept for those in trouble? Has not my soul grieved for the poor?" Job 30:25

"If I have denied the desires of the poor or let the eyes of the widow grow weary." Job 31:16

"The LORD is a refuge for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble." Psalm 9:9

"But the needy will not always be forgotten, nor the hope of the afflicted ever perish." Psalm 9:18

"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

"You evildoers frustrate the plans of the poor, but the LORD is their refuge." Psalm 14:6

"This poor man called, and the LORD heard him; he saved him out of all his troubles." Psalm 34:6

"My whole being will exclaim, Who is like you, O LORD? You rescue the poor from those too strong for them, the poor and needy from those who rob them." Psalm 35:10

"The wicked draw the sword and bend the bow to bring down the poor and needy, to slay those whose ways are upright." Psalm 37:14

"Yet I am poor and needy; may the Lord think of me. You are my help and my deliverer; O my God, do not delay." Psalm 40:17

"A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling." Psalm 68:5

"Your people settled in it, and from your bounty, O God, you provided for the poor." Psalm 68:10

"A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling." Psalm 68:5

"Your people settled in it, and from your bounty, O God, you provided for the poor." Psalm 68:10

"The poor will see and be glad – you who seek God, may your hearts live! The LORD hears the needy and does not despise his captive people." Psalm 69:32-33

"Yet I am poor and needy; come quickly to me, O God. You are my help and my deliverer; O LORD, do not delay." Psalm 70:5

"He will defend the afflicted among the people and save the children of the needy; he will crush the oppressor." Psalm 72:4

"For he will deliver the needy who cry out, the afflicted who have no one to help. He will take pity on the weak and the needy and save

the needy from death." Psalm 72:12-13

"Do not let the oppressed retreat in disgrace; may the poor and needy praise your name." Psalm 74:21

"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

"But he lifted the needy out of their affliction and increased their families like flocks." Psalm 107:41

"For he stands at the right hand of the needy one, to save his life from those who condemn him." Psalm 109:31

"He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor, his righteousness endures forever; his horn will be lifted high in honor." Psalm 112:9

"He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap;" Psalm 113:7

"I will bless her with abundant provisions; her poor will I satisfy with food." Psalm 132:15

"I know that the LORD secures justice for the poor and upholds the cause of the needy." Psalm 140:12

"He upholds the cause of the oppressed and gives food to the hungry. The LORD sets prisoners free" Psalm 146:7

"The LORD watches over the foreigner and sustains the fatherless and the widow, but he frustrates the ways of the wicked." Psalm 146:9

"I know that the LORD secures justice for the poor and upholds the cause of the needy." Proverbs 13:23

"He who despises his neighbor sins, but blessed is he who is kind to the needy." Proverbs 14:21

"He who oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honors God." Proverbs 14:31

"The LORD tears down the proud man's house but he keeps the widow's boundaries intact." Proverbs 15:25

"Better to be lowly in spirit and among the oppressed than to share plunder with the proud." Proverbs 16:19

"He who mocks the poor shows contempt for their Maker; whoever gloats over disaster will not go unpunished." Proverbs 17:5

"He who is kind to the poor lends to the LORD, and he will reward him for what he has done." Proverbs 19:17

"If a man shuts his ears to the cry of the poor, he too will cry out and not be answered." Proverbs 21:13

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

"He who oppresses the poor to increase his wealth and he who gives gifts to the rich – both come to poverty." Proverbs 22:16

"Do not exploit the poor because they are poor and do not crush the needy in court." Proverbs 22:22

"A ruler who oppresses the poor is like a driving rain that leaves no crops." Proverbs 28:3

"He who gives to the poor will lack nothing, but he who closes his eyes to them receives many curses." Proverbs 28:27

"The righteous care about justice for the poor, but the wicked have no such concern." Proverbs 29:7

"those whose teeth are swords and whose jaws are set with knives to devour the poor from the earth, the needy from among mankind." Proverbs 30:14

"Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy." Proverbs 31:9

"She opens her arms to the poor and extends her hands to the needy." Proverbs 31:20

"If you see the poor oppressed in a district, and justice and rights denied, do not be surprised at such things; for one official is eyed by a higher one, and over them both are others higher still."

Ecclesiastes 5:8

"Learn to do right! Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow." Isaiah 1:17

"The LORD enters into judgment against the elders and leaders of his people: It is you who have ruined my vineyard; the plunder from the poor is in your houses. What do you mean by crushing my people and grinding the faces of the poor?" declares the Lord, the LORD Almighty." Isaiah 3:14-15

"to deprive the poor of their rights and withhold justice from the oppressed of my people, making widows their prey and robbing the fatherless." Isaiah 10:2

"With righteousness he will judge the needy; with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth. He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth; with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked." Isaiah 11:4

"The poorest of the poor will find pasture, and the needy will lie down in safety. But your root I will destroy by famine; it will slay your survivors." Isaiah 14:30

"You have been a refuge for the poor, a refuge for the needy in his distress, a shelter from the storm and a shade from the heat. For the breath of the ruthless is like a storm driving against a wall." Isaiah 25:4

"Once more the humble will rejoice in the LORD ; the needy will rejoice in the Holy One of Israel." Isaiah 29:19

"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

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

Isn't the fast I choose: To break the chains of wickedness, to untie the ropes of the yoke, to set the oppressed free, and to tear off every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, to bring the poor and homeless into your house, to clothe the naked when you see him, and not to ignore your own flesh and blood?... If you spend yourselves 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 noonday." Isaiah 58:6-7, 10

"The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners." Isaiah 61:1

"On your clothes men find the lifeblood of the innocent poor, though you did not catch them breaking in. Yet in spite of all this you say I am innocent." Jeremiah 2:34

"I thought, These are only the poor; they are foolish, for they do not know the way of the LORD, the requirements of their God." Jeremiah 5:4

"(They) have grown fat and sleek. Their evil deeds have no limit; they do not plead the case of the fatherless to win it, they do not defend the rights of the poor." Jeremiah 5:28

"If you do not oppress the foreigner, the fatherless or the widow and do not shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not follow other gods to your own harm," Jeremiah 7:6

22 This is what the Lord says: "Go down to the palace of the king of Judah and announce this word there. 2 You are to say: Hear the word of the Lord, king of Judah, you who sit on the throne of David –you, your officers, and your people who enter these gates. 3 This is what the Lord says: Administer justice and righteousness. Rescue the victim of robbery from the hand of his oppressor. Don't exploit or brutalize the foreigner, the fatherless, or the widow. Don't shed innocent blood in this place. 4 For if you conscientiously carry out this word, then kings sitting on David's throne will enter through the gates of this palace riding on chariots and horses—they, their officers, and their people. 5 But if you do not obey these words, then I swear by Myself"—this is the Lord's declaration—"that this house will become a ruin." Jeremiah 22:1-5

"He defended the cause of the poor and needy, and so all went well. Is that not what it means to know me?" declares the LORD." Jeremiah 22:16

"Sing to the LORD! Give praise to the LORD! He rescues the life of the needy from the hands of the wicked." Jeremiah 20:13

"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." Ezekiel 16:49

"He does not oppress anyone, but returns what he took in pledge for a loan. He does not commit robbery but gives his food to the hungry and provides clothing for the naked." Ezekiel 18:7

"The people of the land practice extortion and commit robbery; they oppress the poor and needy and mistreat the foreigner, denying them justice." Ezekiel 22:29

"This is what the LORD says: For three sins of Israel, even for four, I will not turn back [my wrath]. They sell the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of sandals. They trample on the heads of the poor as upon the dust of the ground and deny justice to the oppressed. Father and son use the same girl and so profane my holy name." Amos 2:6-7

"Hear this word, you cows 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

"Hear this, you who trample the needy and do away with the poor of the land." Amos 8:4

"Buying the poor with silver and the needy for a pair of sandals, selling even the sweepings with the wheat." Amos 8:6

"Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the foreigner or the poor. In your hearts do not think evil of each other." Zechariah 7:10

"So I will come near to you for judgment. I will be quick to testify against sorcerers, adulterers and perjurers, against those who defraud laborers of their wages, who oppress the widows and the fatherless, and deprive foreigners of justice, but do not fear me," says the LORD Almighty." Malachi 3:5

### **The Christian Scriptures**

Give to everyone who begs from you, and do not refuse anyone who wants to borrow from you. Matthew 5:42

Beware of practicing your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven.

"So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you. Matthew 6:1-4

"No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth. Matthew 6:24

"No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other.

You cannot serve God and wealth." Matthew 6:24

The blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them. Matthew 11:5

Jesus said to him, "If you wish to be perfect, go, sell your possessions, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me." Matthew 19:21

Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.' Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?' And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.' Matthew 25:34-40

Now while Jesus was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, a woman came to him with an alabaster jar of very costly ointment, and she poured it on his head as he sat at the table. But when the disciples saw it, they were angry and said, "Why this waste? For this ointment could have been sold for a large sum, and the money

given to the poor." But Jesus, aware of this, said to them, "Why do you trouble the woman? She has performed a good service for me. For you always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me. By pouring this ointment on my body she has prepared me for burial. Truly I tell you, wherever this good news is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in remembrance of her." Matthew 26:6-13

Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said, "You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me." Mark 10:21

In reply he said to them, "Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise." Luke 3:11

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free. Luke 4:18

"Then he looked up at his disciples and said: "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. "Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled: "Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh. " Luke 6:20-21

And he answered them, "Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have good news brought to them. Luke 7:22

So give for alms those things that are within; and see, everything will be clean for you. Luke 11:41

Sell your possessions, and give alms. Make purses for yourselves that do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Luke 12:33-34

He said also to the one who had invited him, "When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, in case they may invite you in return, and you would be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous." Luke 14:12-14

So the slave returned and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and said to his slave, 'Go out at once into the streets and lanes of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame.' Luke 14:21

When Jesus heard this, he said to him, "There is still one thing lacking. Sell all that you own and distribute the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me." Luke 18:22

Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, "Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor; and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much." Luke 19:8

He looked up and saw rich people putting their gifts into the treasury; he also saw a poor widow put in two small copper coins.

He said, "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them; for all of them have contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in all she had to live on." Luke 21:1-4

How does God's love abide in anyone who has the world's goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help? 1 John 3:17

In all this I have given you an example that by such work we must support the weak, remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, for he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" Acts 20:35

Share with the saints in their needs; pursue hospitality. Romans 12:13

For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to share their resources with the poor among the saints at Jerusalem. Romans 15:26

For you know the generous act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich. 2 Corinthians 8:9

Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 2 Corinthians 9:7

They asked only one thing, that we remember the poor, which was actually what I was eager to do. Galatians 2:10

Carry one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ....Therefore, as we have opportunity, we must work for the good of all, especially for those who belong to the household of faith. Galatians 6:2, 10

Thieves must give up stealing; rather let them labor and work honestly with their own hands, so as to have something to share with the needy. Ephesians 4:28

Let a widow be put on the list if she is not less than sixty years old and has been married only once; she must be well attested for her good works, as one who has brought up children, shown hospitality, washed the saints' feet, helped the afflicted, and devoted herself to doing good in every way. 1 Timothy 5:9-10

If any believing woman has relatives who are really widows, let her assist them; let the church not be burdened, so that it can assist those who are real widows. 1 Timothy 5:16

As for those who in the present age are rich, command them not to be haughty, or to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but rather on God who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, generous, and ready to share. 1 Timothy 6:17-18

Don't neglect to show hospitality, for by doing this some have welcomed angels as guests without knowing it....Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God. Hebrews 13:2, 16

Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world. James 1:27

For if a person with gold rings and in fine clothes comes into your assembly, and if a poor person in dirty clothes also comes in, and if you take notice of the one wearing the fine clothes and say, "Have a seat here, please," while to the one who is poor you say, "Stand there," or, "Sit at my feet," have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts? Listen, my beloved brothers and sisters. Has not God chosen the poor in the world to be rich in faith and to be heirs of the kingdom that he has promised to those who love him?...If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill," and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? James 2:2-5, 15-16

<sup>1</sup> In the gospel accounts there are two greek words for the English word "poor." There are the penés (pen-ace), understood as the person who serves their own needs with their own hands. It describes the working person, the peasants who have nothing to brag about as they are neither rich or landowners, but they are not destitute or excluded from the social order. Though they lived on the edge of existence and their status lowly, they still had status. But it is important to not that this isn't the word Jesus chooses in His sermon in Luke 4:18-19. It is the próchos (to-khos), which describes absolute and abject poverty. In the Jesus' world (the Mediterranean region) one's status in society was not located solely in economic realities, but was dependent upon a number of conditions, including gender, education, family heritage, vocation, religious standing, economics and so on. This was a word reserved for those of nominal status and spoke to those excluded based upon the social categories of status and honor bound up in any number of conditions mentioned above.

<sup>2</sup> Ancient Near Eastern cultures favored males over females. This was true of the Hebrew people. However, if they followed Torah faithfully they would demonstrate a more equitable society, though not entirely equitable, than neighboring nations.