The Poverty and Justice Bible

New Revised Standard Version

Biblical research:
Sandie Barton and David Spriggs

Poverty and justice in 3-D:
Nick and Claire Page
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in the streets of the town and in the gateways: they no longer had any strength.

27 Then all the people, the young men, the women, and the children, gathered around Uzziah and the rulers of the town and cried out with a loud voice, and said before all the elders, “Let God judge between you and us! You have done us a great injury in not making peace with the Assyrians. For now we have no one to help us; God has sold us into their hands, to be strewed before them in thirst and exhaustion. Now summon them and surrender the whole town as booty to the army of Holofernes and to all his forces. For it would be better for us to be captured by them. We shall indeed become slaves, but our lives will be spared, and we shall not witness our little ones dying before our eyes, and our wives and children drawing their last breath. We call to witness against you heaven and earth, and our God, the Lord of our ancestors, who punishes us for our sins and the sins of our ancestors, do today the things that we have described!”

29 Then great and general lamentation arose throughout the assembly, and they cried out to the Lord God with a loud voice. But Uzziah said to them, “Courage, my brothers and sisters! Let us hold out for five days more; by that time the Lord our God will turn his mercy to us again, for he will not forsake us utterly. But if these days pass by, and no help comes for us, I will do as you say.’

30 Then he dismissed the people to their various posts, and they went up on the walls and towers of their town. The women and children he sent home. In the town they were in great misery.

The Character of Judith

8 Now in those days Judith heard about these things: she was the daughter of Merari son of Ox son of Joseph son of Oziel son of Elkah son of Ananias son of Gideon son of Raphain son of Ahitub son of Eljah son of Hilkiah son of Eliab son of Nathanael son of Salamiel son of Sarasadai son of Israel. Her husband Manasseh, who belonged to her tribe and family, had died during the barley harvest. For as he stood overseeing those who were binding sheaves in the field, he was overcome by the burning heat, and took to his bed and died in his town Bethulia. So they buried him with his ancestors in the field between Dothan and Balamon. Judith remained as a widow for three years and four months at home where she set up a tent for herself on the roof of her house. She put sackcloth around her waist and dressed in widow’s clothing. She fasted the day before the new moon and the day of the new moon and the festivals and days of rejoicing of the house of Israel. She was beautiful in appearance, and was very lovely to behold. Her husband Manasseh had left her gold and silver, men and women slaves, livestock, and fields; and she maintained this estate. No one spoke ill of her, for she feared God with great devotion.

Judith and the Elders

9 When Judith heard the harsh words spoken by the people against the ruler, because they were faint for lack of water, and when she heard all that Uzziah said to them, and how he promised them under oath to surrender the town to the Assyrians after five days, she sent her maid, who was in charge of all she possessed, to summon Uzziah and Chabris and Charmis, the elders of her town. They came to her, and she said to them: ‘Listen to me, rulers of the people of Bethulia! What you have said to the people today is not right; you have even sworn and pronounced this oath between God and you, promising to surrender the town to our enemies unless the Lord turns and helps us within so many days.’

[Other ancient authorities add than to die of thirst]

[Other ancient authorities lack Uzziah and (see verses 28 and 35)]
you to put God to the test today, and to set yourselves up in the place of God in human affairs? 13 You are putting the Lord Almighty to the test, but you will never learn anything! 14 You cannot plumb the depths of the human heart or understand the workings of the human mind; how do you expect to search out God, who made all these things, and find out his mind or comprehend his thought? No, my brothers, do not anger the Lord our God. 15 For if he does not choose to help us within any time he pleases, or even to destroy us in the presence of our enemies. 16 Do not try to bind the purposes of the Lord our God; for God is not like a mortal, to be won over by pleading. 17 Therefore, while we wait for his deliverance, let us call upon him to help us, and he will hear our voice if it pleases him. 18 'For never in our generation, nor in these present days, has there been any tribe or family or people or town of ours that worshipped gods made with hands, as was done in days gone by. 19 That was why our ancestors were handed over to the sword and to pillage, and so they suffered a great catastrophe before our enemies. 20 But we know no other god but him, and so we hope that he will not disdain us or any of our nation. 21 For if we are captured, all Judea will be captured and our sanctuary will be plundered; and he will make us pay for its desecration with our blood. 22 The slaughter of our kindred and the captivity of the land and the desolation of our inheritance—all this he will bring on our heads among the Gentiles, wherever we serve as slaves; and we shall be an offence and a disgrace in the eyes of those who acquire us. 23 For our slavery will not bring us into favour, but the Lord our God will turn it to dishonour. 24 Therefore, my brothers, let us set an example to our kindred, for their lives depend upon us, and the sanctuary—both the temple and the altar—rests upon us. 25 In spite of everything let us give thanks to the Lord our God, who is putting us to the test as he did our ancestors. 26 Remember what he did with Abraham, and how he tested Isaac, and what happened to Jacob in Syrian Mesopotamia, while he was tending the sheep of Laban, his mother’s brother. 27 For he has not tried us with fire, as he did them, to search their hearts, nor has he taken vengeance on us; but the Lord scourges those who are close to him in order to admonish them.

28 Then Uzziah said to her, 'All that you have said was spoken out of a true heart, and there is no one who can deny your words. 29 Today is not the first time your wisdom has been shown, but from the beginning of your life all the people have recognized your understanding, for your heart’s disposition is right. 30 But the people were so thirsty that they compelled us to do for them what we have promised, and made us take an oath that we cannot break. 31 Now since you are a God-fearing woman, pray for us, so that the Lord may no longer feel faint from thirst.' 32 Then Judith said to them, 'Listen to me. I am about to do something that will go down through all generations of our descendants. 33 Stand at the town gate tonight so that I may go out with my maid; and within the days after which you have promised to surrender the town to our enemies, the Lord will deliver Israel by my hand. 34 Only, do not try to find out what I am doing; for I will not tell you until I have finished what I am about to do.' 35 Uzziah and the rulers said to her, 'Go in peace, and may the Lord God go before you, to take vengeance on our enemies.' 36 So they returned from the tent and went to their posts.

The Prayer of Judith

9 Then Judith prostrated herself, put ashes on her head, and uncovered the sackcloth she was wearing. At the very time when the evening incense was being
offered in the house of God in Jerusalem, Judith cried out to the Lord with a loud voice, and said:

4 O Lord God of my ancestor Simeon, to whom you gave a sword to take revenge on those strangers who had torn off a virgin’s clothing to defile her, and exposed her thighs to put her to shame, and polluted her womb to disgrace her, for you said, “It shall not be done” — yet they did it; so you gave up their rulers to be killed, and their bed, which was ashamed of the deceit they had practised, was stained with blood, and you struck down slaves along with princes, and princes on their thrones. You gave up their wives for booty and their daughters to captivity, and to pollute the tabernacle where your glorious name resides, and to break off the strength of their foot-soldiers, and trusting in shield and spear, in bow and sling.

5 ‘For you have done these things and those that went before and those that followed. You have designed the things that your ways are prepared in advance, and your judgement is with foreknowledge.

6 Here now are the Assyrians, a greatly increased force, priding themselves on their horses and riders, boasting in the strength of their foot-soldiers, and trusting in shield and spear, in bow and sling. They do not know that you are the Lord who crushes wars; the Lord is your name.

7 Break their strength by your might, and bring down their power in your anger, for they intend to defile your sanctuary and to pollute the tabernacle where your glorious name resides, and to break off the horns of your altar with the sword.

8 Look at their pride, and send your wrath upon their heads. Give to me, a widow, the strong hand to do what I plan. By the deceit of my lips strike down the slave with the prince and the prince with his servant; crush their arrogance by the hand of a woman.

9 For your strength does not depend on numbers, nor your might on the powerful, but you are the God of the lowly, helper of the oppressed, upholder of the weak, protector of the forsaken, saviour of those without hope. Please, please, God of my father, God of the heritage of Israel, Lord of heaven and earth, Creator of the waters, King of all your creation, hear my prayer!

10 Make my deceitful words bring wound and bruise on those who have planned cruel things against your covenant, and against your sacred house, and against Mount Zion, and against the house your children possess. Let your whole nation and every tribe know and understand that you are God, the God of all power and might, and that there is no other who protects the people of Israel but you alone!’

**Judith Prepares to Go to Holofernes**

10 When Judith had stopped crying out to the God of Israel, and had ended all these words, she rose from where she lay prostrate. She called her maid and went down into the house where she lived on sabbaths and on her festal days. She removed the sack-cloth she had been wearing, took off her widow’s garments, bathed her body with water, and anointed herself with precious ointment. She combed her hair, put on a tiara, and dressed herself in the festive attire that she used to wear while her husband Manasseh was living. She put sandals on her feet, and put on her anklets, bracelets, rings, ear-rings, and all her other jewellery. Thus she made herself very beautiful, to entice the eyes of all the men who might see her. She gave her maid a skin of wine and a flask of oil, and filled a bag with roasted grain, dried fig cakes, and fine bread; then she wrapped up all her dishes and gave them to her to carry.

10 Then they went out to the town gate of Bethulia and found Uzziel standing there...
The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel:

Prologue

1 For learning about wisdom and instruction,
2 for understanding words of insight,
3 for gaining instruction in wise dealing,
4 righteousness, justice, and equity;
5 let the wise also hear and gain in learning,
6 and the discerning acquire skill,
7 to teach shrewdness to the simple,
8 knowledge and prudence to the young—
9 let the wise also hear and gain in learning,
10 and the discerning acquire skill,
11 to understand a proverb and a figure,
12 the words of the wise and their riddles.

7 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.

Warnings against Evil Companions

8 Hear, my child, your father’s instruction,
9 and do not reject your mother’s teaching;
10 for they are a fair garland for your head,
11 and pendants for your neck.
12 My child, if sinners entice you,
13 do not consent.
14 If they say, ‘Come with us, let us lie in wait for blood;
15 and set an ambush—for their own lives!
16 Such is the end of all who are greedy for gain;
17 it takes away the life of its possessors.

The Call of Wisdom

18 Wisdom cries out in the street;
19 in the squares she raises her voice.
20 At the busiest corner she cries out;
21 at the entrance of the city gates she speaks:
22 ‘How long, O simple ones, will you love being simple?
23 How long will scoffers delight in their scoffing
24 and fools hate knowledge?'
Give heed to my reproof;
I will pour out my thoughts to you;
I will make my words known
to you.

Because I have called and you
refused,
have stretched out my hand and
no one heeded,
and because you have ignored all
my counsel
and would have none of my
reproof,
I also will laugh at your calamity;
I will mock when panic strikes
you,
when panic strikes you like a storm,
and your calamity comes like
a whirlwind,
when distress and anguish come
upon you.

Then they will call upon me, but
I will not answer;
they will seek me diligently, but
will not find me.

Because they hated knowledge
and did not choose the fear of the
LORD,
would have none of my counsel,
and despised all my reproof,
therefore they shall eat the fruit of
their way
and be sated with their own
devices.

For waywardness kills the simple,
and the complacency of fools
destroys them;
but those who listen to me will be
secure
and will live at ease, without
dread of disaster.

The Value of Wisdom

My child, if you accept my words
and treasure up my
commandments within you,
making your ear attentive to
wisdom
and inclining your heart to
understanding;

if you indeed cry out for insight,
and raise your voice for
understanding;
if you seek it like silver,
and search for it as for hidden
treasures—
then you will understand the fear
of the LORD
and find the knowledge of God.

For the LORD gives wisdom;
from his mouth come knowledge
and understanding;
he stores up sound wisdom for the
upright;
he is a shield to those who walk
blamelessly
and preserving the way of his
faithful ones.

Then you will understand
righteousness and justice
and equity, every good path;
for wisdom will come into your
heart,
and knowledge will be pleasant
to your soul;
prudence will watch over you;
and understanding will guard you.
It will save you from the way of evil,
from those who speak perversely,
who forsake the paths of
uprightness
to walk in the ways of darkness,
who rejoice in doing evil
and delight in the perverseness
of evil;
those whose paths are crooked,
and who are devious in their
ways.

You will be saved from the loose
woman,
from the adulteress with her
smooth words,
who forsakes the partner of her
youth
and forgets her sacred covenant;
for her way leads down to death,
and her paths to the shades;
19 those who go to her never come back, nor do they regain the paths of life.

20 Therefore walk in the way of the good, and keep to the paths of the just.
21 For the upright will abide in the land, and the innocent will remain in it;
22 but the wicked will be cut off from the land, and the treacherous will be rooted out of it.

Admonition to Trust and Honour God

3 My child, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments;
2 for length of days and years of life and abundant welfare they will give you.

3 Do not let loyalty and faithfulness forsake you; bind them round your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart.
4 So you will find favour and good repute in the sight of God and of people.
5 Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight.
6 In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.
7 Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord, and turn away from evil.
8 It will be a healing for your flesh and a refreshment for your body.
9 Honour the Lord with your substance and with the first fruits of all your produce;
10 then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine.

11 My child, do not despise the Lord’s discipline or be weary of his reproof,
12 for the Lord reproves the one he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights.

The True Wealth

13 Happy are those who find wisdom, and those who get understanding,
14 for her income is better than silver, and her revenue better than gold.
15 She is more precious than jewels, and nothing you desire can compare with her.
16 Long life is in her right hand; in her left hand are riches and honour.
17 Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.
18 She is a tree of life to those who lay hold of her; those who hold her fast are called happy.

God’s Wisdom in Creation

19 The Lord by wisdom founded the earth; by understanding he established the heavens;
20 by his knowledge the deeps broke open, and the clouds drop down the dew.

The True Security

21 My child, do not let these escape from your sight; keep sound wisdom and prudence,
22 and they will be life for your soul and adornment for your neck.
23 Then you will walk on your way securely and your foot will not stumble.
24 If you sit down, ‡ you will not be afraid; when you lie down, your sleep will be sweet.
25 Do not be afraid of sudden panic, or of the storm that strikes the wicked;
26 for the LORD will be your confidence and will keep your foot from being caught.
27 Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to do it.
28 Do not say to your neighbour, 'Go, and come again; you have it with you.'
29 Do not plan harm against your neighbour who lives trustingly beside you.
30 Do not quarrel with anyone without cause, when no harm has been done to you.
31 Do not envy the violent and do not choose any of their ways;
32 for the perverse are an abomination to the LORD, but the upright are in his confidence.
33 The LORD’s curse is on the house of the wicked, but he blesses the abode of the righteous.
34 Towards the scorners he is scornful, but to the humble he shows favour.
35 The wise will inherit honour, but stubborn fools, disgrace.

Parental Advice

4 Listen, children, to a father’s instruction, and be attentive, that you may gain insight;
2 for I give you good precepts: do not forsake my teaching.

‡ Gk: Heb lie down   † Heb from its owners   ‡ Heb know
17 For they eat the bread of wickedness
and drink the wine of violence.
18 But the path of the righteous is like
the light of dawn,
which shines brighter and brighter until full day.
19 The way of the wicked is like deep darkness;
they do not know what they stumble over.
20 My child, be attentive to my words;
incline your ear to my sayings.
21 Do not let them escape from your sight;
keep them within your heart.
22 For they are life to those who find them,
and healing to all their flesh.
23 Keep your heart with all vigilance,
for from it flow the springs of life.
24 Put away from you crooked speech,
and put devising talk far from you.
25 Let your eyes look directly forwards,
and your gaze be straight before you.
26 Keep straight the path of your feet,
and all your ways will be sure.
27 Do not swerve to the right or to the left;
turn your foot away from evil.

2 She does not keep straight to the path of life;
her ways wander, and she does not know it.
3 And now, my child, listen to me,
and do not depart from the words of my mouth.
4 Keep your way far from her,
and do not go near the door of her house;
5 or you will give your honour to others,
and your years to the merciless,
6 and strangers will take their fill of your wealth,
and your labours will go to the house of an alien,
7 and at the end of your life you will groan,
when your flesh and body are consumed,
8 and you say, ‘Oh, how I hated discipline,
and my heart despised reproof!’
9 I did not listen to the voice of my teachers
or incline my ear to my instructors.
10 Now I am at the point of utter ruin in the public assembly.’
11 Drink water from your own cistern,
flowing water from your own well.
12 Should your springs be scattered abroad,
streams of water in the streets?
13 Let them be for yourself alone,
and not for sharing with strangers.
14 Let your fountain be blessed,
and rejoice in the wife of your youth,
15 For the lips of a loose woman drip honey,
and her speech is smoother than oil;
16 but in the end she is bitter as wormwood,
sharp as a two-edged sword.
17 Her feet go down to death;
her steps follow the path to Sheol.
18 Why should you be intoxicated, my son,
by another woman and embrace the bosom of an adulteress?

\[g\] Heb strange  \[h\] Gk Vg: Heb children
21 For human ways are under the eyes
of the Lord,
and he examines all their paths.
22 The iniquities of the wicked
ensnare them,
and they are caught in the toils of
their sin.
23 They die for lack of discipline,
and because of their great folly
they are lost.

Practical Admonitions

6 My child, if you have given your
pledge to your neighbour,
if you have bound yourself to
another,
you are snared by the utterance of
your lips,
captured by the words of your
mouth.
3 So do this, my child, and save
yourself,
for you have come into your
neighbour’s power:
go, hurry, and plead with your
neighbour.
4 Give your eyes no sleep
and your eyelids no slumber;
5 save yourself like a gazelle from the
hunter,
like a bird from the hand of the
fowler.
6 Go to the ant, you lazybones;
consider its ways, and be wise.
7 Without having any chief
or officer or ruler,
it prepares its food in summer,
and gathers its sustenance in
harvest.
8 How long will you lie there,
O lazybones?
When will you rise from your sleep?
9 A little sleep, a little slumber,
a little folding of the hands to rest,
and poverty will come upon you
like a robber,
and want, like an armed warrior.

12 A scoundrel and a villain
goes around with crooked speech,
winking the eyes, shuffling the feet,
pointing the fingers,
14 with perverted mind devising evil,
continually sowing discord;
on such a one calamity will descend
suddenly;
in a moment, damage beyond
repair.

20 My child, keep your father’s
commandment,
and do not forsake your mother’s
teaching.
21 Bind them upon your heart always;
tie them around your neck.
When you walk, they will
when you lie down, they will
watch over you;
and when you awake, they will
talk with you.
22 When you walk, they will
lead you;
when you lie down, they will
watch over you;
and when you awake, they will
talk with you.
23 For the commandment is a lamp
and the teaching a light,
and the reproofs of discipline are
the way of life,
to preserve you from the wife of
another;
from the smooth tongue of the
adulteress.
24 Do not desire her beauty in your
heart,
and do not let her capture you
with her eyelashes;

\(\text{Or a stranger}\)
\(\text{J Cn Compare Gk Syr: Heb the words of your mouth}\)
\(\text{k Or humble yourself}\)
\(\text{I Cn: Heb from the hand}\)
\(\text{m Heb it}\)
\(\text{n Gk: MT the evil woman}\)
Poverty and justice in 3-D

3D in detail

Nearly 50 different topics. Loads to discover, dream and do.
Equality to education; farming to fair trade; trees, tools and even toilets – they’re all there in the Bible. So this is a chance to explore specific issues and see what the Bible has to say about them.

And as we do that, we’ll see how issues of poverty and justice are woven into the fabric of the Bible, and how concern for the poor and the oppressed forms part of the DNA of our faith. Put the details together and you can begin to see the bigger picture: a picture of a God of compassion and love, a God who cares about the details of our lives and longs to see justice in action throughout his creation.

Some of these topics lead us down well-worn paths; others take us into the byways of the Bible, the bits we don’t visit much. How often you do these is up to you. You can do them once a week, or all in one go. It doesn’t matter. The important thing is to follow the trail and see where it leads...

Discover
Find out about the issue. Dig into the Scriptures. Read, react, agree or disagree. But don’t let it stop there. Do your own exploration and discover things for yourself.

Dream
Time to think. Reflect on the issues and dream some dreams. Put your imagination to work, to see what kind of a world it could be.

Do
Take action. Create something; help out; make a noise. Do a bit of research, create a bit of a stir or make yourself useful. Get your hands dirty and get involved! And, of course, pray.
Help yourself

There is more to discover.
Naturally you can’t cover everything in under 50 short columns. The highlighted verses in *The Poverty and Justice Bible* are just some of the verses that address these issues. (In fact, as you work through the 3D sections you’ll find that we refer to verses that aren’t highlighted at all. Why? Often it’s because many of these verses don’t refer just to the poor, but they do have an even bigger impact if you happen to be there at the bottom of the pile.)

So if you can’t find your particular concern in the 3D section, then do your own research. Some tools will be helpful. Get hold of a decent guide to the Bible or a Bible commentary. Check the internet. Find out what other Christians are saying about the issue. And check out ‘Taking it further’ at the end of this section.

So dive into Scripture and see what else you can find. And if you find verses which you think are crucial to the issue, but which haven’t been marked, well, all you have to do is get yourself a highlighter pen...

PEOPLE

Discover: Genesis 1.26–27

Many have argued over what it really means to be ‘made in God’s image’, but at the very least it indicates something profoundly significant about humans. To mistreat people is to forget this crucial fact: they are made in the image of God. This affects not only who we are, but how we behave.

Ancient civilisations, such as Egypt and Assyria, often described their kings as the ‘image’ or representative of their god. Statues of gods or kings were viewed in the same way. These words in Genesis have, as one commentary puts it, ‘democratised this old idea’. Every man and woman bears God’s stamp; everyone is God’s representative on earth.

When we live this out, we are being true to our nature. We walk around this world, reminding people of our Father.

Instead of oppressing others, we empower them; instead of standing idle, we get involved. We stand up for justice, speak out for the powerless and love the unlovely.

Why? Because we’re taking after our Dad.

Dream

What if you were to wear a badge all the time that said ‘God’s rep’?

Do

Build up a picture of what God is like. Every time you read the Bible, write down what it tells you about God, perhaps in a journal.

Lord, I look at the stars at night, and I wonder why you care about us.
I look at the earth, and I wonder why you’ve given us such immense responsibility.
You are the ruler and yet you trust us to rule. You are amazing!
There is an inseparable link between the Bible and the issues of poverty and justice. We hope you’ll explore them both.

**Join the fight against Bible poverty**

Millions still wait for the Bible’s life-changing message in a language they can understand, at a price they can afford or in an appropriate format. At the same time, millions with easy access to the Bible don’t understand its value.

Bible Society – the force behind *The Poverty and Justice Bible* – is working flat out to make the Bible available, accessible and credible the world over. To play your part visit us at [biblesociety.org.uk](http://biblesociety.org.uk)

Want more help in getting into the Bible or living it out in everyday life? You’ll find loads of Bibles, multimedia and other resources to pick from at [bibleresources.org.uk](http://bibleresources.org.uk)

**Get involved with the action**

CAFOD is the official Catholic aid agency for England and Wales, standing side by side with poor communities to end poverty and injustice in over thirty countries across the world. They work with people of all faiths and none.

CAFOD’s vision is a world transformed to reflect the Kingdom of God. A world where the rights and dignity of every person are respected; all have access to the basic needs in life and women and men share equally in shaping their societies and our world. Where the gifts of creation are nurtured and shared by all for the common good and the structures that shape people’s lives are just and enable peace.

Here are just some of the ways CAFOD seeks to make this vision a reality:

- **Strengthening communities**, helping women and men in developing countries to meet their basic needs, like clean water, health care and education. CAFOD helps communities to access fair markets and make a decent living so they can thrive.

- **Supporting vulnerable communities** when disaster strikes before, during and after the emergency through essential aid and long-term rebuilding. CAFOD works to prepare communities to face the unknown, so that they can rapidly respond to and reduce the impact of a disaster.

- **Speaking out for justice and raising awareness** in England and Wales. CAFOD aims to inspire commitment to end injustice and poverty in developing countries, and to enable communities to live in solidarity with the poorest people in our world. There is a CAFOD office in every diocese in England and Wales, find out more about what’s going on in your area and get in touch at [cafod.org.uk/uk](http://cafod.org.uk/uk)

Whether you want to campaign against the root causes of poverty, buy an alternative gift from the World Gifts catalogue, raise money through sponsored events, volunteer your time, or find resources to use with children and young people – you can find a way to help the world’s poorest people through CAFOD. Scripture and Church teaching inform and underpin their work and there are also prayer and reflection resources for use in parishes, groups and on your own. Visit [cafod.org.uk](http://cafod.org.uk) to find out how to get involved.
Taking it further

What if you’re really fired up about poverty and justice? What if you want to take it further – much further? Here are ten ways to get really serious about the issues...

**Shout loudly**

Make a noise! Make a positive pain of yourself. Write letters. Write to your MP. Take it beyond letters and make a campaign. Raise the issue through publicity stunts and leaflets. Tell the people in your church. Speak up for those who have no voice themselves.

**Spend wisely**

Businesses need customers. So make sure that you get something in return. Ask your favourite stores about their ethical policy. Encourage your local shops to embrace fair trade.

**Read avidly**

Become an avid newsreader. Most newspapers now have online versions, so you can search for items that concern you or set alerts to warn you when stories on subjects that concern you come up. There might be blogs that tell others about particular issues or forums. Be intelligent about gathering information: go find it and don’t wait for it to come to you.

**Live responsibly**

The way we live has an impact on the planet and the people (generally poor) who live here. So make changes to your lifestyle. Use low-energy, organic or fairly traded alternatives. Cut your need to consume. Trade fairly, live lives that are more green. At its heart, the issue of poverty and justice is about the way we live.

**Give lavishly**

Getting involved in poverty and justice is not about money, but there’s no doubt that it helps. Look at your own finances and work out what you can give. If you can, commit to giving regularly to a cause that you care about. Don’t have much money yourself? Then see what you can raise through your own creativity, time and effort.

**Travel meaningfully**

More and more Christians are finding that nothing beats actually going out and getting your hands dirty. There are lots of ways for you to get involved, from spending a few weeks to devoting several months or a gap year. But be warned: these visits can change your life, permanently.

**Think biblically**

We’ve highlighted some of the key verses of the Bible. But the amazing thing about the Bible is that, however deep you dig, there is always more to discover. So why not read the whole thing? And why not learn some key verses, commit them to memory and make them a core part of your life?

**Study purposefully**

More and more colleges and universities are offering courses on aid and development, peace and reconciliation and all kinds of other related issues. Or, if you have a school project, see if you can use it to explore issues that really matter to you.

**Volunteer enthusiastically**

Give up some of your time each week to help out at a local charity or not-for-profit organisation. Homeless shelters, after-school clubs, environmental concerns, youth and community work – there are loads of opportunities, all around you. You can also donate time in smaller ways. Maybe you could do something as simple as give your time to an elderly neighbour?

**Pray continually**

Prayer changes things. Prayer makes a difference. Share your concerns with God. Use pictures and images to remind you to pray. Pick a charity and pray for its work. Organise prayer meetings on matters of concern. Become a praying person.