

Truly **Helping the Poor**

1. Giving generously for an urgent crisis is necessary

Emergency relief during floods, famine, disease outbreak, earthquake, etc. is necessary and a wonderful opportunity to love your neighbor, be a good samaritan, and demonstrate the compassion of Christ.

see Acts 11:28 - 30

2. Giving without accountability invites corruption

I heard a story of a man who was working outside his country and sending money back home to a friend, who was to have a house built for him. The friend regularly sent photos of the “progress”, which was a home at different stages of construction. Upon returning home, the man found no home. His friend had stolen the money and had sent photos of local homes being built. The lesson is this ... have a reliable way of knowing the money is actually being used as intended.

see Acts 11:30

3. Giving without understanding true needs invites waste

Have you ever received a Christmas or Birthday gift you didn't particularly care for ? Perhaps, it was something you couldn't use. This can happen when giving to the poor without taking the time and effort necessary to learn their true needs. Sometimes the poor can sell such unneeded gifts to buy what they truly need, but wouldn't it be better to provide them what they truly needed from the beginning ?

4. Giving without long range self-sustainability invites dependency

The saying “ Give a man a fish for a day and he will eat for a day, but teach him how to fish and he will eat for a lifetime” rings true when it comes to truly helping the poor. Giving should have a long term, self-sustaining benefit. Otherwise, waiting for and depending on handouts can become a crippling lifestyle. Poverty is not just an economic condition, it's also a state of mind and lifestyle. Reducing poverty must involve dealing with each of these components.

5. Giving without local initiative invites lack of local ownership

I once read a story about a caring group of kindhearted believers that traveled to the foreign mission field to put up a church building. They worked hard and the church was completed. The locals appreciated the effort, but had very little input or involvement in the project. The locals never felt it was truly “their own” church. In their minds, the foreign donor was responsible for it, not themselves. This has a huge impact on how people handle and maintain such donations. It's not uncommon for such projects to become delapidated because the donor didn't continue to support what they built, and locals never felt responsible.

6. Giving without a comprehensive strategic plan invites failure

The saying goes “If you fail to plan, then you plan to fail”. Those involved in a project or ministry effort must do the research, sit down, design a plan, count the cost, organize the resources, and initiate the plan. Failing to do this often leads to the premature ending of the work. Nehemiah was a wonderful example of wise and strategic planning and excellent outcome.

7. Giving without cultural sensitivity invites misunderstanding

Money and misunderstanding can often go hand-in-hand when helping the poor. Cultural understanding (awareness of the local way of life, including economics) is very important. I know of a story that brings home this point.

A local man was hired by a foreign missions worker to work for a couple days on a project. The local man was paid a large (in local economic context) sum after the first days work. This also happened the next day. The man was delighted by this surprising wage. The foreign missions worker returned home and the local worker now found it very difficult to work for the normal local wage, having “tasted” the large sums for those few days. Truly helping the poor also involves being sensitive to local economics. In this case, it would have been better to pay the local wage and give a separate “gift” of the remaining money.

To sum it all up . . .

*Giving without God's wisdom & love is not truly doing
the best for the poor.*