



To love God is to love people. **Pastor Margaret Tay** explains what it takes to carry Christ's heart for the needy and hurting.

A large, glossy red heart is held gently in two hands. The heart is the central focus, with the text 'LOVE in ACTION' overlaid on it. The background features a faint, golden, decorative floral pattern on the right side.

LOVE in ACTION

Two persons were having a conversation. The first said, "Sometimes I would like to ask God why He allows poverty, suffering and injustice when He could do something about it." The other responded "Well, why don't you ask Him?" The first man replied, "Because I'm afraid He would ask me the same question." Today we are faced with this question: "What would we do with the poverty and injustice that we see around us?" and "What would we do with the poor and needy?"

This is an invitation for us to know God and feel His broken heart through prayer.



Bob Pierce, the founder of World Vision prayed: "Let my heart be broken by the things that break the heart of God." We need to have God's heart, but it is not easy to have that in our busy society. We have compassion fatigue.

"Let my heart be broken by the things that break the heart of God."

Jeremiah 22:16 – He (King Josiah) 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. **God equates caring for the poor and needy as knowing Him.**

God's heart is indeed for the poor and needy. About 2,000 verses in the bible are on poverty and justice. Book after book you will see this recurrent theme.

In Isaiah 58:1-11, the Israelites' prayers were not answered even though they prayed and fasted, because they had missed the point. Their religious acts of fasting and prayer – their pseudo spirituality – would not get them anywhere if they were not doing what was right.

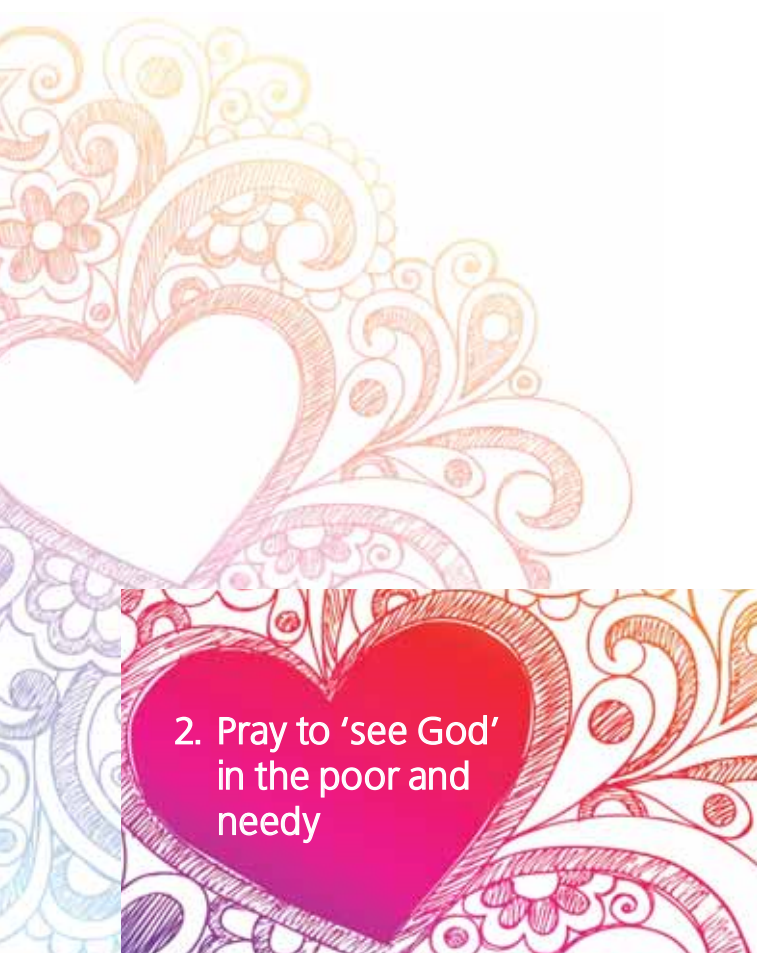
Isaiah 58:6-7 explains what God told them to do: *Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter – when you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?*

These verses talk about justice, fairness and a concern for the poor.

We need to pray to have God's heart for the poor and needy, a heart of compassion and generosity.



- ✠ To repent of apathy and indifference
- ✠ To have God's heart for the poor and needy:
 - A heart of compassion – to feel for them
 - A heart of generosity – to give of your talents, time, and treasures.



2. Pray to 'see God' in the poor and needy

In Matthew 25:31-46, those who showed acts of love for the "least of these" were blessed and welcomed by Christ into His Father's Kingdom.

Good works do not get us saved, but when we are saved, it should be part of our nature to do good works.

Richard Stearns, President of World Vision, US paraphrased verses 42 and 43:

For I was hungry, while you had all you needed.
I was thirsty, but you drank bottled water.
I was a stranger, and you wanted me deported.
I needed clothes, but you needed *more* clothes.
I was sick, and you pointed out the behaviors that led to my sickness.
I was in prison, and you said I was getting what I deserved.

What will we do with the poor and needy? We need to 'see God' in them, which means that when we see them, we need to respond. We need to love them, listen to them. We need to treat them the way we would treat Jesus.


Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me. (verse 40)

The poor and needy are **made in the image of God**. Richard Stearns

also said, "When we see them as God sees them, we will glimpse His image in their faces – Christ in His most distressing disguise." This means that they have potential in God, a God-given destiny and that we must have a relentless belief in them!



- ✝ To repent of any prejudices
- ✝ To repent of any unkindness
- ✝ To 'see God' in the poor and needy
- ✝ To treat the poor and needy as you would treat Jesus
- ✝ To have a relentless belief in people and their God-given destiny.



3. Pray God's Vision for the poor and needy to be fulfilled

God had a vision for the poor and needy. We also need to have the same vision. Isaiah 61:1-3 was in fact Jesus' mission statement. Verse 1 says, *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.

God's vision for the poor and needy is that they will experience the "Whole" gospel – physical, economic, emotional, spiritual healing and restoration.

Take time to pray Isaiah 61

The Poor (verse 1)

- That they will experience the whole gospel and place their hope in God
- The poor includes those with a 'poverty spirit' – having lost hope in their future, they have lost faith in themselves

The Brokenhearted (verse 1)

- The deserted (by children, parents, or by another)
- The healing of their hurts and pain
- That they will find comfort and provision

The Captives (verse 1)

- Freedom from incarceration
- Freedom from bondage to addictions: drugs, gambling, smoking, drinking
- Freedom from bondage to their past
- Freedom from the devil's lies about themselves and their future

Those who Mourn (verse 3)

- That God will bestow upon them a crown of beauty instead of ashes,
- The oil of gladness instead of mourning,
- A garment of praise instead of spirit of despair,

- A double portion instead of shame, and
- An inheritance instead of disgrace

The Poor and Needy (verses 3, 6 and 9)

- That they will be oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of His splendour, (verse 3)
- That they will be priests of the Lord, ministers of our God (verse 6)
- That they will be known among the nations (verse 9)

Partners of the Vision (verses 4-9)

- Trinity Christian Centre
- Care Community Services Society (CCSS)
- Social workers and agencies
- National leaders

Leonard Ravenhill says: "The world is not in need of a new definition of Christianity, it is in need of a new demonstration of Christianity."

Pastor Margaret Tay heads the Missions Project Office in Trinity Christian Centre. She is also a missionary, church consultant and trainer of pastors and leaders.

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