

# Charity and the Christian Life

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*Our Calling to Give,  
Serve, and Stand*



## ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

- Two Views on the Role of the State in Charity by *Craig Stern and Stephanie Summers*
- “Deny yourself, pick up your cross, and follow Him” by *Esther Larson*
- The Smartest Way to Help the Poor by *Peter Fry*



David Nammo,  
Executive Director  
and CEO

## An Aroma Pleasing to the Lord

When I hear the word “worship,” my mind usually pictures singing and musical instruments.

But worship is much more than song (which is good in my case, as my singing is often off key). The proper worship of the Lord puts everything in perspective. He is worthy of our worship. We, on the other hand, are not worthy of worship. Isn't that really the struggle going on in the hearts of men and women across the world?

Isn't the push and pull really about being able to do whatever we want – whether it is with our money, our lives, our things, and our bodies – without any responsibility? Is my talent mine, or is it to be given to the service of others, through the church, a ministry (like CLS), or my vocation? Is my money mine, to be spent how I desire, or is it to be used in obedience of the Lord? The list of where I (and I suspect others of you) push and pull with the Lord is endless.

The Lord does not command obedience, sacrifice, or money because He needs it. He doesn't need it. He doesn't need me or you. Rather, He loves us and desires to be in a right relationship with us. He knows that we will worship something at the end of the day, and it is better that we worship Him and not ourselves (or some other ideal or person). When I am performing the act of “worship,” it reminds me (my mind), my mouth (through singing), my material goods (through giving) that He is worthy and He is God.

This issue of *The Christian Lawyer* is about “charity.” Or more specifically, how we worship the Lord and love our neighbor through charity.

If we are honest, we dislike this topic. We don't want people telling us how to “give” – and we are suspicious that the person talking to us is really trying to get us to “give” to them. Admit it, you are just as cynical as I am about this topic.

The Old Testament repeatedly describes the proper worship of Him – through sacrifice and offering – as an aroma pleasing to the Lord (Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers). The same is true for us today. The Lord sees our gifts, monetary and otherwise, as a “fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God.” (Phil 4:18 ESV) And through this worship, we get the proper perspective on our money, our talent, and our lives. They are for building His kingdom, not for building our kingdom.

As Christian Legal Society, we ask lawyers to give from all areas of their lives – to see their vocation as something to give daily to the Lord – whether it is helping whatever client the Lord provides, giving monetary support to CLS and its ministries, or giving to others through mentoring and relationships.

It is rare for me to see my life as an aroma acceptable and pleasing to the Lord. And honestly, giving money is the easiest way to do it. But, I am thankful that the Lord calls us to give deeper, longer, and wider than is comfortable for us. If our lives and our vocations are for Him, it really puts things into perspective. And it is not often the perspective I have on a daily basis.

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# IN THIS ISSUE

## Charity and the Christian Life: Our Calling to Give, Serve, and Stand

<b>Charity and the Role of the State: Authority to Pursue Charity is Not Granted to the State</b> .....	3
Craig Stern	
<b>Charity and the Role of the State: God Has Authorized the State to Do Charity</b> .....	5
Stephanie Summers	
<b>Why Do Christians Give?</b> .....	9
John Cortines	
<b>“Deny yourself, pick up your cross, and follow Him”</b> .....	12
Esther Larson	
<b>The Smartest Way to Help the Poor</b> .....	14
Peter Fry	

<b>From the Executive Director</b> .....	ii
--	----



### ATTORNEY MINISTRIES

<b>Interview with Connie Bourne</b> .....	18
Mike Schutt	



### LAW STUDENT MINISTRIES

<b>No Country for Old Men?</b> .....	21
Mike Schutt	



### CENTER FOR LAW & RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

<b>Three Modern-Day Martin Luthers Before the Supreme Court.</b> .....	24
Kim Colby	



### CHRISTIAN LEGAL AID

<b>The Law of Charity: Providing Legal Services to the Poor.</b> .....	27
Ken Liu	

<b>CLS Attorney Chapters List.</b> .....	30
--	----

<b>From the President.</b> .....	33
----------------------------------	----

# Charity

*and the*

# Christian Life



# Charity and the Role of the State: Two Views

## Authority to Pursue Charity is Not Granted to the State

BY CRAIG STERN

In one sense, Charity should have everything to do with the State. The State administers its law, and much of that law reflects the Law summarized by “Love God and neighbor.”<sup>1</sup> This Love<sup>2</sup> is the Greek “Agape”—“Caritas” in Latin, “Charity” in English. It may well be that the ideal State pursues nothing but Charity in this sense.

But in the sense of Charity as relief to the poor by transfer of wealth, this essay will suggest that Charity should have little to do with the State.<sup>3</sup>

The Lord God has special regard for the poor. We too are to hold them in special regard. They are especially to be loved.<sup>4</sup> This love could take many forms. Which form is after God’s design?

If the Law and the Prophets hang on the command to love God and neighbor, what do they teach about loving the poor—and specifically about how the State is to be involved in that love?

The Law and the Prophets teach much about loving the poor and command that Love, but never do they even suggest that the State, as the force-wielding civil government, should be the agent or enforcing power for Charity.

Israel was commanded to tithe, to keep the sabbatical and jubilee years, to allow free gleaning, to lend to poor brothers, and generally to relieve poverty. But none of these commands gave rise to a duty that the Law marked as civilly enforceable. Enforced they surely were—by the Lord God Himself. But wholly absent from the Law is any commission for humans to enforce these commands.

Similarly, when the Prophets declare the Lord’s judgment for mistreatment of the poor, that mistreatment never encompasses the failure of the State positively to relieve their poverty. Again, wholly absent is any indication that the State was to exercise authority over Charity.

Such absences of grants of authority in the Bible are pregnant omissions. Take as an example the case of Cain. Genesis 4 tells us that Cain shed the blood of his brother Abel. Under the Noahide law of Genesis 9, Cain’s blood is to be shed in return. Cain himself appears to realize that he has the shedding of his own blood coming to him for the shedding of Abel’s blood. But God protects Cain from such a shedding, promising sevenfold vengeance on whoever should presume to exact this penalty. Why? Because Genesis 4 precedes Genesis 9. Until humankind was invested by God Himself with the authority to exact corrective justice, it lacked that authority. Authority ungranted is authority denied—an unsurprising corollary to the truth that all authority derives from God.

If, then, the Bible teaches that the authority to pursue Charity is not granted to the State, Charity is not a matter that the State is permitted to pursue. Such seems to be the teaching of the Old Testament. What of the New?

The New Testament, unlike the Old, speaks little of the role of the State. What it does speak, however, does not alter the teaching of the Old Testament. Rather, it reinforces that teaching.

In the Sermon on the Mount, our Lord emphasizes the distinction between the demands of the States and the demands of God:

You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.’ But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be liable to the hell of fire.

You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that everyone who looks at

a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

It was also said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.' But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.<sup>6</sup>

This teaching solemnly warns against confusing the norms for civil government—the State—with the norms for self-government. It, therefore, highlights the significance of the presence or absence of the civil enforcement of norms, the marker that indicates whether a norm is for the State or not. In the case of acts of Charity, this marker indicates that they do not fall within norms for the State.

Other teachings of the New Testament leave this conclusion fundamentally untouched. Romans 13 and 1 Peter 2, apparently embracing a classical commonplace,<sup>7</sup> speak of the ruler in the State punishing those who do evil and praising those who do good. But unless the evil and good they punish or praise extends to every evil and good deed, the description demands some limiting principle. Such a principle we have seen in the Old Testament and in the Sermon on the Mount.<sup>8</sup>

If the Bible teaches that Charity is not for the State to pursue, it is best that the State not pursue it. Best for the poor, who benefit far more from relationship and community in private Charity than from State programs.<sup>9</sup> Best for the Church, called in power and in blessing to discharge its full responsibility to the poor. Best for the State, kept separate from the Church without the confusion of roles inherited from establishments of religion in the classical model. If God, who can supply every need, calls humankind to relieve poverty apart from State power, it may well be because He calls us to action far more transformative than what the State can do. And the transformation would reach not only the poor.

Of course, a Biblical call for private instead of State Charity is not a call for an immediate halt to State Charity. (The command

against kidnapping is not a call for suddenly penitent kidnapers crossing Death Valley to put their victim out of the car.) Far more likely it is the call for the Church faithfully to perform its own duty to love the poor.



Craig A. Stern is a professor at Regent University School of Law and the Director of the Honors Program. He began as an adjunct with Regent in 1988 and began teaching full time in 1990. Stern received his J.D. from the University of Virginia School of Law and his B.A. *cum laude* from Yale University. At Yale he studied Classics.

Stern has been admitted to the bar in Virginia, the District of Columbia, and several federal jurisdictions. He has also served as an associate attorney for Fried, Frank, Harris, Shriver & Kampelman; as the Assistant Deputy Director of the Legal and Administrative Agencies Group, Office of President-elect Ronald Reagan; as counsel to the Subcommittee on Separation of Powers, U.S. Senate Committee on the Judiciary; as the associate editor of BENCHMARK for the Center for Judicial Studies in Washington, D.C., and Cumberland, Virginia; as special counsel and director of publications for the Constitutional Law Center; and as Special Assistant United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia in Norfolk.

His teaching and research interests include the following: Human Rights, Federal Courts, Conflict of Laws, Jurisprudence, Legal History, and Criminal Law.

## END NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Matthew 22:34-40.
- <sup>2</sup> Taking the form of the noun.
- <sup>3</sup> Space does not suffice to offer a more thorough argument from the whole of Scripture, including the key passage on civil government (Genesis 9:6).
- <sup>4</sup> See, e.g., Matthew 25:31-46.
- <sup>5</sup> Again, taking the civilly enforceable provisions of the Torah as law of the State.
- <sup>6</sup> Matthew 5:21-22, 27-28, 31-32, 38-39 (ESV) (footnotes omitted).
- <sup>7</sup> Paul J. Achtemeier, *Peter I Hermeneia (Hermeneia: A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible)* 184 (1996).
- <sup>8</sup> The praising of those who do good—perhaps by allowing tax benefits or awarding prizes—raises the question of State involvement in Charity other than by the far more typical transfer of wealth from compulsory taxes. Such praising might be performed without transgressing the principles explained in this essay.
- <sup>9</sup> See Marvin Olasky, *The Tragedy of American Compassion* (1992).

# God Has Authorized the State to Do Charity

BY STEPHANIE SUMMERS



“If the Church would just do the Church’s job, we wouldn’t need government spending taxpayer money to help people.” It might surprise you to know those words were not said by a person with hostile feelings towards the institutional church. Instead, they were the thesis statement for an address given by a sitting U.S. Senator who began his remarks to a roomful of Christian college students by stating that he was a Christian and was glad for the opportunity to speak with his brothers and sisters.

Fifteen minutes later, two brave students responded to the Senator’s remarks by raising their hands. With immense respect for the office in their voices, they asked questions about the Senator’s remarks. “Mr. Senator,” said one, “So if I am following what you have said, you are suggesting that the institutional Church should be responsible for making sure the sewage systems work for everyone. Is that what you’re saying?” The Senator nodded in affirmation. The Senator then called on another student, who said, “Mr. Senator, I’m from Appalachia. My dad died when I was little. My mother is disabled, and she is not able to work. The government has helped us our whole lives. Everyone I know at home is poor. Are you saying that the churches in my community should have figured out how to keep my family from starving, or paid so my brothers and I had medical care, or so I could go to college?”

To which the Senator replied, “Yes.”

I wish I was making this story up, but I was in the room when it happened, because I was the next speaker. The Senator’s remarks summarize one side of a long-standing conflict about whether or not God has given government the authority to do charity. This binary view—that the institutional Church should be responsible for caring for the well-being of the poor and that government should not—was a regular part of debates during welfare reform of the 1990s. Importantly, lasting and constructive contributions by my colleagues at the Center for Public Justice during the welfare reform discussions helped shape policies based in part on demonstrating that government bears authority from God to do works of charity in the world.

God’s call to love our neighbors is one that should resound in every area of life. As my colleagues have elsewhere discussed,<sup>1</sup> Scripture is clear in its requirement not only for individuals but for all institutions—including families, faith communities, and governments—to respond to God in obedience by helping those in need. Scripture is clear that governmental authority is itself given by God, and numerous passages expound on the requirement that political leaders must care for the poor. For one example, in a celebration of just rulers, Psalm 72 joyfully describes a God-honoring king as one whose authority is God-given and used to demonstrate zeal for the well-being of the poor. Yet the Bible is even clear that God requires care for the poor from political leaders who do not know Him! For example, in his dream interpretation to the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel urges Nebuchadnezzar to repent of his wickedness. Given Nebuchadnezzar’s many violations of God’s law, it is quite notable that Daniel identifies only two—the pagan king’s lack of recognition of God as the Most High and Nebuchadnezzar’s unkindness to the poor.

As Christians, it is important for us to say that governments—not only individuals or institutions like families and churches—are in fact authorized by God to help ensure the well-being of those in need. God is the one who gives government the responsibility for upholding public justice. This understanding, that government must provide both for the well-being of all the members of the political community and simultaneously make room for other institutions such as families, churches, and businesses to make their fullest contribution to human flourishing, helps resolve a key tension in the debate over whether or not it is legitimate for government to provide charity. No longer is

the question whether or not God has authorized government to provide charity. Based on the understanding that government is one institution given the authority by God to do so alongside other institutions, the question becomes more tightly focused on when it is best for government to provide charity directly or when it is best done in concert with other institutions—and if so, how. Often in addressing these questions, government must rightly articulate limits upon itself as an institution, so to ensure that it makes room for other institutions to make their God-given contributions to address human needs.

While in many cases of the provision of charity government is not the first resort, government is the institution able to provide the capacity needed to mobilize response at the scale and specialization needed. For example, government should not sit on the sidelines in times of natural disaster while waiting for compassionate citizens to respond to their neighbors' needs with the resources and skills incommensurate to the task. Furthermore, government can continue to provide a charitable response after the immediate crisis has passed and after the compassion of neighbors has focused on addressing other needs elsewhere.

Just as in Scripture where we see God call government officials to act with equity towards the poor and those in need, government in its provision of assistance is also called upon specifically to ensure equity of distribution to every member of the political community in its care. As I write this, many of the residents of the Gulf Coast are experiencing the devastating effects of Hurricane Harvey, one of the worst storms in U.S. history. It is also only a few weeks after we as a nation witnessed the horror of white supremacists and neo-Nazi groups marching through the streets of Charlottesville, Virginia. What if groups such as these, which will on principle not offer protection and care for every neighbor, were the ones with whom the decisions about the distribution of lifesaving rescue and relief efforts to the Gulf Coast rested? What if these groups were the ones responsible for deciding whose lives were worth saving? Now focus instead on the picture of what God has authorized—government as an institution, bound to uphold the rule of law in addressing need, with the equality of every person who God made in His image fully in view in offering this assistance.

That God has given government the authority to do charity is a view based on Scripture and one my colleagues and I offer in the current considerations of cuts to the social safety net.<sup>2</sup> Christians



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have much to contribute to the well-being of our society by affirming the diversity of institutions God created and the authority God has given to each one, including the work of charity.



Stephanie Summers is the CEO of the Center for Public Justice (CPJ), an independent, non-partisan civic education and public policy organization based in Washington, D.C. CPJ works to equip citizens, develop leaders, and shape policy through a variety of initiatives including its publications *Public Justice Review* and *Shared Justice*. She is a co-author with Michael J. Gerson and Katie Thompson of *Unleashing Opportunity: Why Escaping Poverty Requires a Shared Vision of Justice* (Falls City Press, 2015). A frequent speaker and moderator, she also contributed a chapter to the edited volume *The Church's Social Responsibility* (Christian Library Press, 2015) and has written for publications including *Comment* and *Q Ideas*.

Stephanie serves on several advisory boards including the Bright Promise Fund for Urban Christian Education, the Centre for

Christian Scholarship at Redeemer University College, and the Banking on the Margins project for Cardus. She earned her master's degree in nonprofit management from Eastern University, where she chairs the board of fellows for the PhD in Organizational Leadership.

Prior to her appointment at CPJ, she spent 12 years with the CCO, where her roles included Vice President for the Eastern Region and Vice President for Organizational Development. Stephanie began her career in nonprofit administration as Executive Director of The Open Door, a church-based youth center in Pittsburgh, PA. She and her husband, Jason E. Summers, are residents of the District of Columbia.

## END NOTES

- 1 Gushee, David P. *Christians and Politics Beyond the Culture Wars: An Agenda for Engagement*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2000. See Chapter 11, "Welfare Reform's Challenge to the Evangelical Church" by my colleague Dr. Stanley Carlson-Thies.
- 2 For more written specifically for Christian young professionals, see the work of my colleagues at [SharedJustice.org](http://SharedJustice.org).

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# God's Call to Give

## Why Do Christians Give?

BY JOHN CORTINES

*"Keep your life free from love of money."<sup>1</sup>*

*"Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor."<sup>2</sup>*

*"Do good ... be rich in good works ... be generous and ready to share."<sup>3</sup>*

Christians consider the Bible to be our source of truth in matters of faith. And the Bible says more about money than it does about heaven and hell combined. Jesus says more about money than heaven, hell, or prayer, and there are over 2,300 verses pertaining to money in the Bible. Clearly, it occupies an important place in what we consider to be God's inspired word. So, what does it say?

In short, three things:

1. All of our wealth originates from and belongs to God.<sup>4</sup>
2. In light of this, our wealth should be used for God's purposes.<sup>5</sup>
3. God's purpose is to restore the world to wholeness. This occurs spiritually through salvation in Jesus Christ and physically through our service and giving to serve the poor, needy, and weak.<sup>6</sup>

Implicit in these three statements is the idea that our wealth is not our own. As followers of Jesus we believe we have been bought with a price—when He died for us, we were purchased into His eternal family, accepted and redeemed.<sup>7</sup> In light of what He's done for us, nothing but radical and total submission to His purposes would be reasonable.<sup>8</sup>

Thus, our wealth is not to be used for our own goals, but rather subsumed into the greater purposes of God. Because we believe it is God who enables us to get wealth in the first place, and that we are the recipients of His great grace in our lives, our natural and joyful response is to engage in radical generosity on behalf of the Christian church and the poor.



This gets expressed in a variety of ways, but a few examples might paint a picture of what 21st-century Christian giving looks like in its highest and best form. (All are true stories!)

Mark and Megan, in their late 20's, are so thankful for Mark's \$50,000 bonus he earned at his law firm. Joyfully, and with a great sense of purpose, they give the entire amount away toward international justice efforts for the poor and a Christian camp they admire. They rank the opportunity to give to God's work more highly than their own potential enjoyment of this money, including their imminent need for a home down-payment.

Tom and Bree relocate to a poor neighborhood, despite Tom's very high income. They read about God's heart for the poor in the Bible, and they want to know God's heart. They lead a Bible study for the community, and eventually welcome a family in need to stay in their home for awhile, while they get back on their feet. They give a huge fraction of their income away,

raising their family on the median family income out of a desire to serve the world around them.

Greg and Alison are home shopping. They buy a house that is worth about half of what they can afford because they want to be able to give generously to address international poverty and spread the Christian message of hope, and don't want to be inhibited by their mortgage. The house is less than what they'd like to have, but they're thankful God has given them money to share with others.

## Paul's Goodbye

The Apostle Paul stands second only to Jesus in his influence on the Christian faith. In his final goodbye to the Christian community around him, he gave them this charge:

And now I commend you to *God and to the word of his grace*, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. I coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities and to those who were with me. In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way *we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."*<sup>9</sup>

He commends them to the word of God's grace—*i.e.*, the Christian message of spiritual salvation. And then he tells them that he never coveted money and even goes on to charge them to help the weak and remember that it is more blessed to give than to receive.

Why is Paul mixing up money behaviors with the *spiritual* message of God's grace? Consistent with the rest of the Bible, Paul

didn't see money and spiritual matters as separable. His life, free of covetousness and fully generous, was evidence of God's grace acting in his heart. As the well-known Christian pastor Tim Keller says, reflecting on this passage:

To the degree you understand the Gospel of grace, you will live a radically generous life! If you truly have a spiritual inheritance, you are going to be *promiscuously generous* with your earthly inheritance.

Christian giving springs from our view of God. Because we believe He emptied Himself and gave everything for us,<sup>10</sup> we have no proper response but to turn around, face the world around us, and give ourselves away.



John Cortines is the co-author of *God and Money: How We Discovered True Riches at Harvard Business School*. John lives in Orlando with his family and works for Generous Giving, an organization that can help you host a Journey

of Generosity retreat with your friends to further explore this message. John has shared the Biblical message of generosity on national radio and television, and at conferences around the country.

## END NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Hebrews 13:5.
- <sup>2</sup> Luke 18:22.
- <sup>3</sup> 1 Timothy 6:17-19.
- <sup>4</sup> Deuteronomy 8:18, 1 Chronicles 29:11-14, Colossians 1:16.
- <sup>5</sup> Luke 12: 42-43, Matthew 25: 31-46.
- <sup>6</sup> Luke 4:18-19, 2 Corinthians 5:18, Matthew 28: 19-20, Jeremiah 22: 13-16, Proverbs 19:17.
- <sup>7</sup> 1 Corinthians 6:20.
- <sup>8</sup> Matthew 16:24, Luke 14:33.
- <sup>9</sup> Acts 20: 32-35 (emphasis added).
- <sup>10</sup> Philippians 2:5-8.

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“

This is the most Gospel fluent approach to money that I have ever experienced. I think this is a watershed moment for our family.

– Luke K., JOG Participant

“

My anxiety came from the fear of losing what we had because we did work hard for it and the things that we did have... felt like [they were] sustaining us. And I felt like if we lost those things, would we really be happy?... Little did we know that God had something just so much bigger in store for us.

– Mark P., Attorney in NYC

# Seeing the Need, Meeting the Need

## “Deny yourself, pick up your cross, and follow Him”

BY ESTHER LARSON

Scripture mentions “poverty” and “justice” 2,100 times. Yet the concept gets considerably less ink in Christian magazines and less attention from the pulpit because it’s not sexy or easy, and it’s definitely not comfortable.

It isn’t easy to help the poor because poverty is complex, leaving us confused as to how to help without hurting or being insensitive or “enabling.” It isn’t comfortable because helping the poor means we leave our Starbucks-laden neighborhoods and go across town to engage with people who may have complicated circumstances—unemployment, homelessness, mental illness or physical disability, or lack of familial support.

But Jesus didn’t justify our not helping the poor simply because we aren’t sure how to do it, feel uncomfortable, or might face layers of complexity. We’re simply called to show compassion to the poor, the marginalized, the outcast, the widow, and the orphan, and trust Him for the rest.

Jesus also had a specific end goal in mind for any social service He engaged in. In Luke 4:18, Jesus says: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor.” Following His example of healing hearts and bodies, as we’re providing free legal services, serving a meal, or volunteering at a homeless shelter, we should prioritize spiritual needs and physical ones. Why? Because people will get hungry again. Homeless shelters crumble. Every day, new legal issues inevitably arise. But moth and rust cannot destroy what Jesus brings—new life.

So we need to serve, and we need to serve in a Christ-centered way. We also need to serve locally and globally. In Acts 1:8, we’re told to go to “Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the earth.” Our focus herein is how to serve in Judea—our own backyards. Because service isn’t a trip. It’s a lifestyle. A daily habit of looking upward and outward right where we are.

Here’s a simple strategy on how to go about this. Ask:

### Is it you?

A friend recently related how he was volunteering with kids. Thing is—he hated kids, at least kids that weren’t his own.

Before you commit to a volunteer opportunity, assure that you (1) somewhat like what you’re doing and (2) have some gifting for it.

If you’re not a cook, let’s not inflict your cooking on the homeless. If you hate sitting in meetings, a board involvement might not be your best way to help a nonprofit. It’s okay to acknowledge and admit that some service simply isn’t a fit.

I’m a big flower lover. So one way I serve is by teaching flower arranging classes at The Salvation Army to women suffering from domestic abuse and drug addiction. Looking at Matthew 6:30, we talk about how God feeds and clothes nature and, therefore, we can trust His good, fatherly hand to care for our needs.

My dad is not a flower guy. He’s a board guy. He likes working with legal aid clinics, like Open Hands Legal Services in New York City. He likes taking notes, being in meetings, and finding solutions to problems over coffee and donuts.

Donuts aren’t really my mom’s thing. She often does service that involves neither an organization nor a formalized commitment. She’s been known to fill an envelope with cash for a family that lacks heat across town. She likes organizing Christmas parties at The Salvation Army homeless shelter in Phoenix. That’s who she is, and her volunteer work reflects her personality and aversion to donuts.

To borrow from Marie Kondo, ask yourself, “Does it bring me joy?” That could be a good indication or inclination of where you should serve.

### Is it you? And yet, it’s not about you.

On a recent volunteer project here in New York, a young woman chose not to help bake the cookies or write notes to

the FDNY, but chose instead to pose in selfies for her carefully curated Instagram and Facebook posts: “Look at me. I’m doing good today!”

This is what the New York Times Magazine calls “virtue signaling.” If our service is a feel-good, voyeuristic, photo opportunity or resume filler, we may need to check our hearts. As Lin-Manuel Miranda brilliantly writes in *Hamilton*: “There’s nothing rich folks love more, than going downtown and slummin’ it with the poor.”

As Christians, we want to be cautious of Facebook humblebrags and “virtue signalling.” Are we driven by acclaim and praise of men as we serve? Or are we humbly aware of our own spiritual poverty and desperate need for the grace of Jesus? To seek Jesus and keep our eyes off ourselves in service, prayer must anchor our work. Prayer for those we’re serving. Prayer for God’s hand and spirit to be intimately involved in the volunteer work we’re engaging in. Prayer that we might be the “best audiovisual for Christ,” as Joni Eareckson Tada calls it, as we help the hurting.

Jeremiah 45:5 says it best: “Should you then seek great things for yourself? Do not seek them.”

No, it’s not about us.

### Service need not be solitary.

Entering into others’ brokenness through service can and should be a family affair. In Nehemiah 4:13, God stationed people as families—the ultimate small group. Incorporate your kids or your Christian brothers and sisters from Christian Legal Society or your church to participate with you in service.

The deepest and most bonding spiritual and emotional experiences I’ve shared with my parents and siblings have been through service. Our family motto of Micah 6:8—“Do

justly. Love mercy. Walk humbly with God.”—has fueled family volunteer work with Teen Challenge, Teen Missions, Prison Fellowship, The Salvation Army, Bowery Mission, and Joni & Friends (a ministry of Joni Eareckson Tada).

On a recent visit to New York, my nephew asked, “Aunt Esther, why are people standing on the corner with cardboard signs begging for money?” Seven-year-old Sebastien had never seen homelessness in the cozy, affluent suburbs of Cleveland and wanted to understand how people end up there and how he could help.

When Sebastien got home, he took his life-size stormtrooper figure and hauled it down to The Salvation Army shelter for the kids there. Sebastien might only be seven, but he intuitively understood there was a problem, and the love of Christ compelled him to do something about it.

Are you gifted in specific ways to meet a need in your area? Have you checked your heart motivation? Can you incorporate someone else in your service? God can use a stormtrooper, a Harvard law degree, a widow’s mite, or loaves of bread to accomplish His purposes.



Esther Larson is one of six kids, which means life is never dull. Esther grew up in Phoenix, attended school in the South, lived abroad in Paris, and NYC’s Downtown is now home. She works in the nonprofit world at Hope for New York and is a deaconess with Redeemer Presbyterian Church. Esther loves that her job involves helping all New Yorkers flourish in His name. She can’t get enough of barre, live jazz, and dark chocolate (not all together!). Esther is thankful for her parents whose unwavering devotion to living out their faith in practical ways inspires her to humbly engage with the local church, local community, and beyond, for His honor and in His name.

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# The Smartest Way to Help the Poor

BY PETER FRY

We live in an exciting time. Technology is transforming our world. We have reasons to be optimistic. Since 1990, nearly 1.1 billion people have moved out of extreme poverty.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, our good intentions often backfire. Charity programs based on handouts too often end up stifling growth and perpetuating bad circumstances. Instead of creating long-term economic and social development, they put the poor person in a perpetual stance of a receiver, not a doer, let alone a giver. Thankfully, there is a better way. Faith-based micro-enterprise offers the hard-working poor a dignified means to improve their individual and family circumstances and, gradually, the potential to transform entire communities.

## The Problem with Charity Today

We have the means to eradicate poverty, yet 11% of the world's population lives in conditions no human should have to endure. A recent documentary produced by Poverty, Inc.<sup>2</sup> describes it best as the "Global Poverty Industry," an intricate system of governments, lobbyists, foreign aid, and corruption. Take Haiti for example, where over 2,000 non-governmental organizations are still in active operation, nearly eight years later. The problem with many of these programs is their own inertia for survival rather than creating sustainable improvements and moving on.

*No country has ever developed on AID. However, there are plenty of countries that have developed through trade, innovation, and business.*<sup>3</sup>

It is time to invest our resources and efforts in creating long-term economic opportunities for the poor, giving them the dignity and power to work. By doing this, we acknowledge their freedom, human potential, and God-given creativity.

## Putting a Face behind "The Poor"

At the root of the problem is our human ability and tendency to disassociate the "human" from the "problem." For decades, the western cultures have viewed poverty as a "problem" to be fixed, rather than as a person to restore. When Westerners write a check to provide for the needs of a child in a developing world, they can overlook the parent of that child, who wants nothing more than the ability to provide for their own family

and not rely on the handouts of a stranger on the other side of the world.

*It is easy to have the heart for the poor, but it can be significantly harder to have a mind for the poor.*<sup>4</sup>

Having a mind for the poor requires patience, commitment, humility, and trust. How do we change from having a heart for the poor to also having a mind for the poor? How do we turn our handouts into long-term solutions to make a lasting economic impact? One way is to focus on building up the entrepreneurial poor.

## Meet Sylvia—a Real Life Example of a Person and Her Community Transformed

Meet Sylvia, a woman in a rural village on the outskirts of Entebbe, Uganda.

I met her last June, when she led me through her village to the stone quarry where she worked for many years, laboring through the scorching heat from dusk till dawn, seven days a week to provide for her basic needs. Sylvia is no different from my mother in Ireland (also named Silvia) except she was born in Uganda.

That day by the stone quarry, Sylvia shared with me her turning point. One day she looked around and saw no hope for her community and decided that it was unacceptable. She thought if only she could start her own business, she could flip her situation; however, there was no access to business start-up loans in her rural community. Then Sylvia discovered our local partner, ACI, who assisted her with starting a business. With her first loan, Sylvia built a shelter to host a convenience store and enough inventory to get the business started. From the proceeds of her business, she bought fifty chickens and four pigs and started a second business. Through her hard work, managing her risks and making creative and wise decisions as a pioneer entrepreneur, Sylvia has impacted not only her family, but also other members of her community, who are following in her footsteps. Sylvia did flip her community's circumstances. The hope that was nowhere to be seen is now visible at every corner—from small restaurants and storefronts to piggeries and even a home-cinema.



When Sylvia took the opportunity to receive a loan and business skills training, she became the catalyst her community needed. Her determination and hard work inspired twenty other ladies to start businesses, which have transformed their village both economically and spiritually.

As I was leaving Sylvia's home, she said to me with a huge smile on her face, "From the time I started my businesses until now, I have something to show for my hard work. I used to be a tenant, but now I am a land owner. Now, my next life dream is to learn how to drive a car!"

### Focusing on the Whole Person's Need and not Just the Material Need

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus' seminal message, He does not say blessed are the "poor in material wealth." Rather He says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit."<sup>5</sup>

Some generous and compassionate person could have given Sylvia free clothing or some free food, or even money to buy the inventory needed to start the business. These instant solutions, however, might cause more harm than good. Our desire to offer immediate "help" often ignores the potential long-term

hazards of handouts. Beginning with a \$200 loan, business skills training and Christian fellowship, we can facilitate a mother's dream, like Sylvia's, providing her the opportunity to use her God given talents. God has given the poor talents and skills, and He intends to use them for His glory. To our joy, we can help facilitate that for them.

*"In the West (even in the church), we tend to focus on the material needs of the poor."<sup>6</sup>*

*"No-one wants to be a beggar for life."<sup>7</sup>*

*"While poor people mention having a lack of material things, they tend to describe their condition in far more psychological and social terms than our North American audiences. Poor people typically talk concerning shame, inferiority, powerlessness, humiliation, fear, hopelessness, depression, social isolation, and voicelessness. Low-income people daily face a struggle to survive that creates feelings of helplessness, anxiety, suffocation, and desperation that are just unparalleled in the lives of the rest of humanity."<sup>8</sup>*

If the tides were turned, would you want someone stepping into your life to make all your decisions for you? Probably not. As humans, we want the dignity to make our own choices. The poor are no different.

## The Smartest Way to Help the Poor

To create sustainable development, we need to empower the poor with opportunities to generate wealth. When we empower the poor to become agents of their own change, we combat the chains of inferiority, powerlessness, and voicelessness. We give power back to them as mothers, fathers, husbands, and wives.

Faith-based micro-enterprise programs provide a place for community discipleship, small business loans, and training that break the economic and spiritual barriers surrounding the poor. This allows us to transition from poverty alleviation to wealth creation—helping the poor to dream of flourishing in the Lord’s promises of “*giving us a more abundant life.*”<sup>9</sup>

This labor of love entails four critical steps:

- 1) Find: We are called to come to our brothers’ aid.<sup>10</sup> The hardworking poor have the desire and the capacity to do more. For micro-enterprise development to work, we must identify these individuals in needy communities.<sup>11</sup>
- 2) Fund: We are compelled to provide counsel, training, loans, discipleship, and fellowship to the poor, not handouts.<sup>12</sup> Faith-based micro-enterprise development requires a holistic approach.<sup>13</sup>
- 3) Follow: We walk with them, holding them accountable to paying back their loans and providing continued counsel and fellowship.<sup>14</sup>
- 4) Fulfill: We enable previously poor individuals to fulfill their God-given abilities and we, in turn, fulfill our calling to live in peace and harmony with our brothers and sisters.<sup>15</sup>

*“Preaching a holistic vision of Christian stewardship focuses on the priceless work of making disciples of all nations. Christian missionaries laid the groundwork for profound cultural transformation, for the ideas, attitudes, and institutions that allow for human flourishing, including wealth creation among the poor.”<sup>16</sup>*

Let us strive to have a mind for the poor, not just a heart for the poor. In doing so, we are building up our brothers and sisters, the very thing God has asked us to do.



Peter Fry, a native Irishman, is the Executive Director of EndPoverty, a faith-based micro-enterprise organization focused on holistic transformation of the enterprising poor around the world.

He has long held a passion for promoting entrepreneurial solutions to poverty, so EndPoverty is a natural fit. He is on a mission to help the poor end poverty by removing paternalism from “international development” and “Christian ministry.”

Over the years, Peter has worked alongside many faith-based nonprofit organizations. Peter’s service to the poor has a well-established foundation in both his heart and his experience. Along with his wife, Erin, Peter most recently worked in Hong Kong for International Care Ministries (ICM), a faith-based nonprofit serving the ultra-poor in the Philippines.

### END NOTES

- 1 <http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/poverty/overview>.
- 2 Poverty, Inc. trailer <http://www.povertyinc.org/>.
- 3 Magatte Wade, Poverty, Inc.
- 4 *Corrigan Clay*, Poverty, Inc.
- 5 Matthew 5:3 “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”
- 6 Asmus, B. and Grudem, W., *The Poverty of Nations: A Sustainable Solution*, Crossway, 2013.
- 7 Daniel Jean Louis, Entrepreneur, Author, Poverty, Inc.
- 8 Asmus, B. and Grudem, W., *The Poverty of Nations: A Sustainable Solution*, Crossway, 2013.
- 9 John 10:10 “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.”
- 10 John 15:12 “‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”
- 11 James 2:5 “Listen, my beloved brothers, has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he has promised to those who love him?”
- 12 2 Thessalonians 3:10-12 “For even when we were with you, we would give you this command: If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat. For we hear that some among you walk in idleness, not busy at work, but busybodies. Now, such persons, we command and encourage in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living.”
- 13 2 Corinthians 9:10:10 “He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God.”
- 14 Proverbs 27:17 “Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another.”
- 15 John 10:10 “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.”
- 16 Poverty Cure Statement of Principle <http://www.povertycure.org/statement-of-principles/>.

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# Interview with Connie Bourne



BY MIKE SCHUTT

**T**his summer, Connie Bourne joined CLS as the new Director of Attorney Ministries. I thought I'd take some time to introduce her. It's been a joy to get to know her, and I look forward to seeing how she ministers to and with lawyers in the years to come.

**MIKE SCHUTT:** Connie, you started at CLS on July 10th. How's it going so far?

**CONNIE BOURNE:** Absolutely fabulous. You always have an idea of what you think the work will be, and what the people will be like, and I'm so excited because it actually exceeded my expectations. It's an answer to prayer, and it was a long road getting here, but I'm just absolutely thrilled.

**MS:** Welcome, and congratulations on being part of this team. I'm really happy to have you as a colleague. Tell me a little bit about yourself.

**CB:** Sure. Well, actually I started out as a journalist. I really wanted to be a journalist. My professor, although I did well in the class said, "I'm not quite sure you're cut out for this because you sort of write very technically." So I thought, "Hmm, I need to find something else that would satisfy my curiosity for information and for working with the public," and I thought of law.

I decided to go to law school. Right after, I clerked for a tax court judge, which was a great experience. From there I went to the County Attorney's Office. Working for a judge, I was able to use a lot of those skills in representing the county in litigation. From there I led a pro bono effort for the Bar Association. Then I wanted to learn about computers and technology, which I love, and so I went to work for a major corporation for quite a few years. Then I decided that I missed the people

part of practice. I was doing a lot of paperwork, huge contract deals, and so I opened up my own solo practice for a couple of years, and then ... years ago, I had asked the Lord to use me in my work, and Christian Legal Society appeared, and so that's how I ended up here.

**MS:** How long did you practice law before you came to CLS?

**CB:** About 15 years.

**MS:** It's nice to have somebody with law practice experience serving lawyers in the Attorney Ministries desk at CLS, and I know you're excited and you bring a wealth of ideas as well. Tell me a little bit about your spiritual journey. How long have you known the Lord?

**CB:** Actually my siblings and I grew up in the church. The interesting thing is that my parents didn't attend, but they sent us. So we went, and I remember the most exciting thing was that you got a dime for each chapter of the Bible you could memorize. So, I know all the chapters of the Bible, because you got a dime for that. That was years ago, but my spiritual journey started early on. I was very young, and I always sort of knew the Lord had a purpose for me. I grew up like an average kid, teenager, went through my rebellion stage with my parents but I always knew that there was some type of service I would do.

Actually, before going to law school I weighed the opportunity to go to Seminary. I was offered admission to a really nice Seminary and to law school at the same time, so I struggled with, "Should I become a Pastor or should I become an attorney?" I just prayed about it, and the direction was, "Go into law." And that's what I did.

**MS:** How did the Lord lead you toward CLS? I know it wasn't that you hated law practice and wished you were doing something else. I know it was more of a calling into this kind of ministry in the legal field ... How did God make that clear to you?

**CB:** Well, I knew that I would always go back into ministry, and I remember promising Him I would do that ... I would practice my law and, at some point, I would either go to Seminary or go back into ministry, but during the years of my practice, I always felt a very strong relationship with my colleagues and other lawyers. I knew we all worked very hard and were committed to serving the community and the public. A lot of my colleagues and other attorneys who became friends of mine wanted something more. Some of us would just pray together. I was always able to integrate my faith with my work ... that was never an issue, but other attorneys would often ask me, "How do you do it? How do you reconcile that? How do you explain that to the public?"

I just happened one day to sort of Google ... I'm an information person, and I found CLS. I researched it and prayed about it. Really, because I had a great practice. I said, "Lord, is this it? Is this where I'm supposed to go?" The answer was, "No," at first. Actually, it was more like "Wait." So, I waited three months, and then in three months I prayed again, and it was like, "Green light. Go." And that's what I did.

**MS:** What was exciting to you about working with attorneys in the Attorney Ministries division that attracted you to it?

**CB:** I think what attracted me to it was the potential to help thousands of attorneys, and for attorneys to help one another to integrate, as I said, their faith and practice ... to be able to pray, and to be able to have a Bible in their offices, and to be able to make decisions that were spiritually guided, in addition to being legally guided. So, what excited me was being able to actually take that and put that in a bottle and distribute it. Then we all would have this same knowledge and would be able to not only have peace and understand that law is a mission, but also to help the public ... help our community.

The exciting part is to be able to ... we already have the spiritual and the Biblical. What I would like to do is take that and grow that to practical. How do I do that every day? How do I help attorneys deal with clients who are difficult or deal with situations that border on ethics? That's the exciting part, actually to see what the Lord's going to do with the program.

**MS:** That sounds great. You've gone to a couple meetings of lawyers just locally. What do you hear from lawyers as you talk

to them? What are you hearing out there from the profession these days?

**CB:** Well, one is how to interact with attorneys who are not Christian or attorneys of faith. That's a really big issue a lot of attorneys are asking me. The scenario we had last week at one of the chapter meetings was what to do when you're in the courthouse, and there's an attorney in the hall, screaming and yelling and blaspheming and using the Lord's name in vain. What do you do? That's one example. The other example is ... a real case scenario of an attorney who felt he needed to express his faith, and so he signed a legal pleading with his name and then added, "In the name of our Lord" behind it, and the judge said to him, "You have to remove that." So, what do you do in that situation?

What I'm finding is that it's real life cases, real life scenarios, what do we do, and how do we handle those things. The answers are wonderful because attorneys come from different experience levels and are able to provide guidance. So, for the first scenario, if you find someone screaming, what do you do? Well, we realize that the first issue is safety. You must make sure you and other folks are safe. Some individuals said, "I would approach the person and try to help them. Try to ask them what they needed." Others said, "I would send an email." Others said, "I would pray about it ... if I felt that it was my role to do something, I would."

The wonderful thing, Mike, is there may not be one answer, but now we have guidance on the things we can consider to resolve that issue. That's what's exciting. Do you sign your name that way? Some folks said, "Well, one way to show your allegiance to your faith is to wear the CLS pin. You could have the CLS mug." Right? Everyone's walking around with their mugs. There's other ways you could do it that would not jeopardize you or your client with the judge. So, the idea is that there are best practices ... there are ways to express your faith, to work with clients and still maintain your faith, and to adhere to those values that many of us would not ever think of practicing, or living, without, and so you're able to be an attorney, and you're able to be a Christian attorney successfully, and that's the goal. That's what I would like to show and to share with attorneys nationwide.

**MS:** It's fun to have those conversations and hear practical examples of what lawyers are struggling with and the kinds of things they're trying to think about as they struggle with what it means to be a Christian in practice. I guess that's probably the coolest part of our job—talking to lawyers and law students from around the country and hearing these kinds of stories and struggles that folks are having.

As you look ahead—and I know this is kind of an unfair question, cause you're still figuring out where the office supplies are—what excites you about the future?

**CB:** Well, what excites me is that I do believe in my heart that attorneys can grow. I'm very excited about the new generation of attorneys. The Bible speaks to teaching your child as you go about the city and as you go about doing your everyday tasks, and so I think that rule applies to attorneys. I want attorneys who have these types of experiences and who are successful in their practices to mentor younger attorneys and encourage them.

I think a lot of young folks are not sure. They have a lot of questions. My daughter, she's recently graduated, and she weighed the option of, "Can I still be a Christian and be a lawyer?" She wasn't sure she could do that, and so the encouraging thing to me is that we pass on the knowledge and the wisdom that these young people can make a difference. This generation can come in, and they can have their faith, and they can do whatever it is that the Lord has set before them with confidence.

They can even serve our congregations. I know for example, in my church, we have about 10,000 members. A lot of folks don't know there are Christian attorneys they can go to. When

my clients would come to see me, they'd say, "It's a blessing to have an attorney who can pray with me or who understands our Lord." So, that's the vision I have, where it goes, or my future, I just want to be a catalyst, an instrument, to help other attorneys to go out and be in the world, to be in the congregations, to be in offices, to be strong, and to be encouraged in their faith while they're doing that.

**MS:** Thank you, Connie! Connie and I are also on the planning team for the Northeast Retreat. We've set dates for that in Frost Valley, New York, February 23-25, 2018. I encourage folks interested in CLS to give Connie a call or shoot her an email. She's happy to talk, aren't you Connie?

**CB:** Absolutely, Mike. Absolutely. Lawyers are my favorite people, so I definitely welcome calls, emails. I'm just here. Anything I can do to help our profession, to help the public to view our profession as leaders and as people with integrity, and we are. I'm very excited, and I look forward to speaking with folks and hope to meet many of them in person. It's an exciting future for Christian Legal Society.



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# NO COUNTRY FOR OLD MEN?

BY MIKE SCHUTT

The Coen brothers' 2007 classic adaptation of the Cormac McCarthy novel *No Country for Old Men* opens with a monologue by Sheriff Ed Tom Bell (Tommy Lee Jones). He wonders about the "old timers" — lawmen from his family and the Texas of his past. "You can't help but compare yourself against the old timers," he says. "Can't help but wonder how they would've operated these times." He laments the changes in "these times" — and the seemingly new brand of evil that stalks the country these days.

This sets the stage for the rest of the film, an extended — and depressing — meditation on whether "these times" are really any worse than those the old timers faced.

The answer from this Coen Brothers' film is a resounding "no." The bad guys have always been around, and they are no worse today than in days gone by. Evil has always seemed to triumph. It has always taken courage to face up to it.

But the movie goes further. In featuring one of the most exquisitely *bad* dudes in modern cinema in the person of Anton Chigurh (Javier Bardem), the Coens starkly proclaim that today's evil is twisted, relentless, vicious, and unstoppable. Chigurh is a villain to cherish. At the same time, there is no

sympathy for the view that "the world is going to hell in a hand-basket." That is, evil has always run amuck in the world; evil men do triumph.

Yet in *No Country for Old Men*, there is not a thing we can do about it. Courage? Pointless. A sense of duty in the face of evil? Vanity. Solutions? Not possible, even if we could grasp the depth of the problem.

Chigurh is not brought to justice in the end, and there is no sense that, even if he were, it would be in satisfaction of the demands of a moral order greater than the Fate that seems to run the universe. In other words, not only is there great evil among us, there is no rhyme or reason in its presence, and there is certainly no point in facing up to it. As we watch, we feel a bit of the despair engulfing Sheriff Ed Tom Bell as he realizes that he is no match for the world, that it really is "no country for old men."

Jesus lived in that "country," too. He lived under a regime that denigrated and oppressed his people. He constantly butted heads with religious leaders who thought they had all the answers to knowing God, and yet rejected Him when He showed up in their midst. He was put to death by those He came to save.

Yet in the days leading up to His death, He encouraged his disciples:

Behold, the hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home, and will leave me alone. Yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me. I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world. (John 16:31-33 (ESV))

We do indeed live in an age that will tempt us to despair, that will drive us to ask, “How did it get this bad?” We will be tempted to think we have it worse than anyone ever has, that the dilemmas we face, the hatred we see around us, and the temptations that beset us are new lows in human history. Yet Jesus warned us that we will have tribulation. And He claimed that He has overcome.

We often act as if Jesus gives us this word of encouragement so that we can hang on another day. So we can fight the good fight, even though it is a losing battle. Survive until He takes us home. We are like the aging narrator in the Yeats poem *Sailing to Byzantium*. Leaving the place that is “no country for old men” (the movie takes its name from the opening line of the poem), he sails away where he can be “gathered into the artifice of eternity,” out of the “natural” world. In other words, “I’ll fly away, O glory, I’ll fly away.”

This is not our calling as disciples of Jesus, and may it never be! Christ did not overcome the world so that we meekly survive it in the face of the evil stalking the country. He tells us He has overcome the world so that we might have both peace in the face of evil and the courage to confront and overcome it.

This is no meaningless struggle, doomed to fail in a Coen-esque world of random hopeless events. No, *this world* is the place of Christ’s victory, the locus of the spiritual battle, and the stuff of his redemption. It is this world that He has redeemed, and it is this battleground on which we stand as ambassadors:

That is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. (2 Cor. 5:19-20 (ESV))

We long for justice, and that is why we bother to despair in its absence. We strive for order, even when we claim it is gone....God is at work, reconciling all things to Himself in Christ.

In Christ, God is reconciling lawyers and legal institutions (and clients and professors and paralegals) to Himself. We are ambassadors of the King in the foreign country of the legal academy and law firms and the criminal courthouse, places that often seem as if they are “no country for old men,” with “new” challenges, strange evils, and seemingly insurmountable barriers. Yet God is at work, and Jesus already has overcome. We can have peace in Him and courage in the face of tribulation.

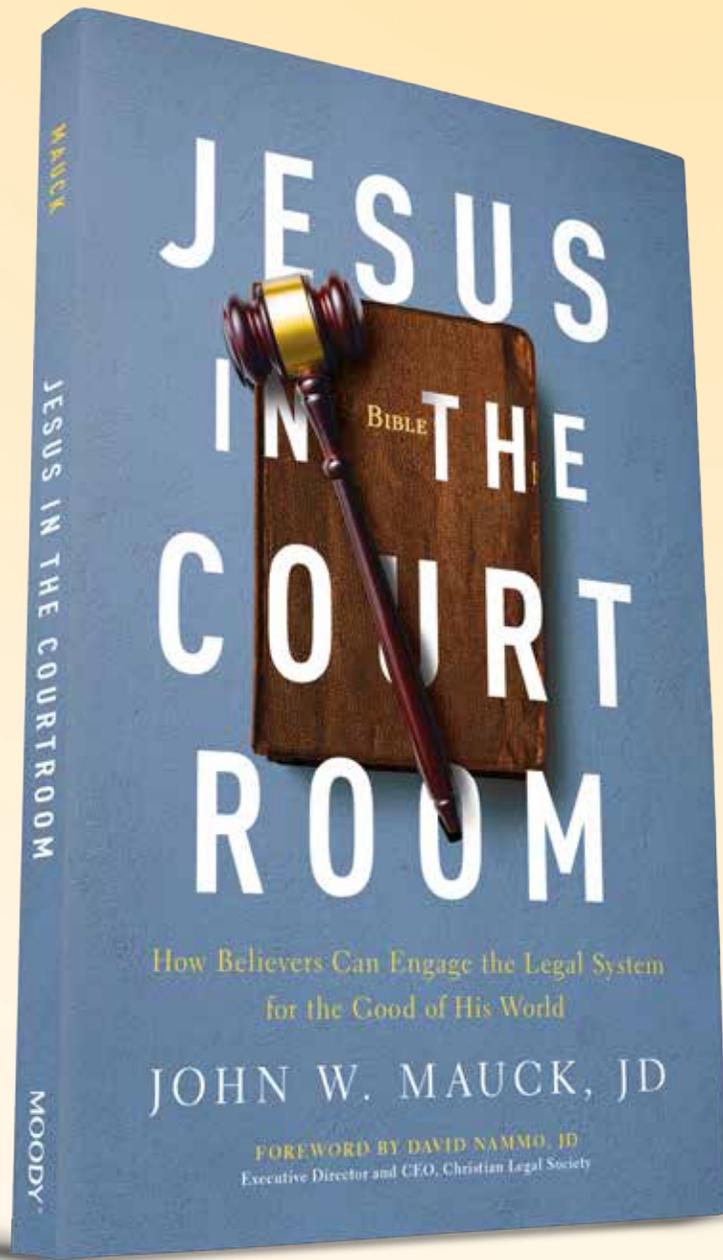
In “these times,” even in the legal profession, many claim that there is no Creator and, therefore, neither design nor order in the universe. We are subject to random catastrophe and to chance. Our fate is based on nothing more than the toss of a coin. Justice is a flawed human construct. The law, however, like the movies, has a certain symmetry, a true beauty and moral center that cannot be ignored. We long for justice, and that is why we bother to despair in its absence. We strive for order, even when we claim it is gone. Parties are reconciled, victims are compensated, the oppressed are vindicated, and evil conduct is punished, even in a fallen system. Not always; not perfectly. But often and regularly. God is at work, reconciling all things to Himself in Christ.

May we continue to have hope in a Redeemer who has overcome the world and who gives us peace as we live amidst broken people and broken systems. And may God empower us to be ambassadors in this hard, but beautiful and grace-laden country.



Michael P. Schutt is Director of Law Student Ministries for CLS. He is an associate professor at Regent University School of Law, and he serves as National Coordinator for InterVarsity Christian

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# Three Modern-Day Martin Luthers Before the Supreme Court

BY KIM COLBY

*I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not retract anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience. I cannot do otherwise, here I stand, may God help me, Amen.*

MARTIN LUTHER AT THE DIET OF WORMS (1521)

October 31, 2017 marks the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, which birthed freedom of individual conscience on religious matters. Five hundred years later, the struggle to protect individual religious conscience continues, including in the United States Supreme Court when it hears a case that may determine whether citizens who hold traditional religious beliefs regarding marriage and human sexuality will be allowed breathing space to live according to their religious consciences.

In *Masterpiece Cakeshop v. Colorado Civil Rights Commission*, the Court will decide whether the First Amendment is violated when a state punishes a citizen for refusing, for reasons of religious conscience, to create a cake that celebrates a same-sex

wedding. Jack Phillips, owner of Masterpiece Cakeshop, declined to create a cake for a same-sex wedding because he believes it would be a sin to participate in celebrating a same-sex wedding. Despite the fact that another bakery readily created the cake they wanted, the couple brought a sexual orientation discrimination claim against Jack Phillips. A state civil rights commission found Jack Phillips had violated Colorado law and prohibited him from creating cakes for any wedding unless he created cakes for same-sex weddings.

Jack Phillips appealed to Colorado's appellate court, which upheld the Commission's ruling, and the Colorado Supreme Court declined to hear his appeal. The U.S. Supreme Court, however, granted review of his free speech and free exercise claims with oral argument likely to be heard in December.

*Arlene's Flowers v. State of Washington*: Barronelle Stutzman, the owner of Arlene's Flowers, sold flowers to a same-sex couple for many years but declined to arrange flowers for their wedding. The Washington State Attorney General initiated proceedings against her, after which the ACLU brought a lawsuit

against Mrs. Stutzman on behalf of the couple. A state trial court found she violated the state law prohibiting sexual orientation discrimination and awarded fines, damages, and attorney's fees against her. The state supreme court agreed. Mrs. Stutzman stands to lose her business and her home because the attorney's fees are likely to be hundreds of thousands of dollars. Mrs. Stutzman has filed a petition for review in the United State Supreme Court, asking that it be heard alongside *Masterpiece Cakeshop*.

*Neely v. Wyoming Commission on Judicial Conduct & Ethics*: A third case raises the question of whether a judge may be punished by the government for refusing to perform a same-sex wedding ceremony, despite the judge's belief that such marriages are prohibited by God.

Judge Neely held two judicial positions, a state judgeship in which she was not authorized to perform weddings for anyone and a local, part-time magistrate position in which she performed weddings for couples who independently contacted and paid her. Wyoming magistrates may decline to perform a wedding for a variety of reasons.

In 2015, after same-sex marriage became legal in Wyoming, a local newspaper reporter called Judge Neely to ask whether she was "excited" about performing same-sex marriages. Judge Neely responded that her religious beliefs would not allow her to do so but that other magistrates were willing. Even though no same-sex couple had asked Judge Neely, and numerous other magistrates were willing to perform same-sex weddings, the Wyoming Commission on Judicial Conduct & Ethics brought charges against Judge Neely and ordered that she be removed from both judicial positions.

On appeal, the Wyoming Supreme Court reduced her punishment to a reprimand but required her to stop performing any weddings unless she performed same-sex ones. Judge Neely has filed a petition for review with the U.S. Supreme Court.

### Should Jack Phillips Bake Two Cakes?

Would God have Jack Phillips just bake the cake? Of course, there is really only one answer to that question: Whether Jack Phillips should create a cake is between him and his God. Likewise, whether Mrs. Stutzman should create a floral arrangement is between her and her God, as is Judge Neely's decision whether to perform a same-sex wedding ceremony.

These mature Christians sincerely believe that God requires them not to perform or celebrate a same-sex wedding. Granted

**When mature Christians believe God is calling them to risk their reputations and their businesses to do something that is countercultural, it is quite possible that God is actually calling them to make a costly sacrifice.**

that mature Christians are imperfect people, they nonetheless often have experience in discerning God's direction. When mature Christians believe God is calling them to risk their reputations and their businesses to do something that is countercultural, it is quite possible that God is actually calling them to make a costly sacrifice.

Many Christians confidently, even carelessly, opine that Jack should bake the cake or, better yet, two cakes. Certainly it is possible that God might lead a Christian to create a cake or floral arrangement for a same-sex wedding. It is more difficult to believe that God would condone a Christian performing a same-sex wedding.

But surely all Christians should be able to respect fellow Christians who believe they would be disobeying God if they participated in a same-sex wedding. Consider an analogous situation in the early Church when the Corinthian Christians disagreed whether a Christian could in good conscience eat meat that had been sacrificed to idols. The Apostle Paul instructed the Christians who could eat meat in good conscience to "[b]e careful . . . that the exercise of your rights does not become a stumbling block" to those whose consciences would not allow them to eat meat. (I Corin. 8:9). Might it even be judgmental to criticize other Christians for refusing to create a cake or floral arrangement or to perform a wedding ceremony—especially when one is not privy to how God has responded to their prayers for guidance?

Recently, Jack Phillips appeared on the talk show *The View*. To cheers from the studio audience, two of the show's co-hosts castigated him for his religious beliefs. One co-host lectured him about what Jesus would have him do, without any apparent sense of irony that she was lecturing another person

regarding what his faith required. A second co-host flailed him for being “judgmental,” again without any self-awareness that she was being judgmental.

The public demand for Jack Phillips’ head will reach a crescendo when the Court hears oral argument, probably in December. His case will trigger abundant opportunities for Christians to share their faith with co-workers, neighbors, and family. Now is the time to prepare for those conversations.

The Christian who chooses to say, “If it were me, I would bake the cake” needs to be prepared to continue the conversation by explaining why Jesus has the authority to command how we live. The Christian who chooses to say, “If it were me, I would not bake the cake” needs to be ready to explain Jesus’ boundless grace toward all of us sinners.

But regardless of the response, it is wrong to throw Jack Phillips under the bus of popular opinion. Just as we cannot imagine joining the Colosseum crowds’ cheers as Christians were delivered to the lions, so we should not remain silent as our culture condemns Christians who cannot in good conscience do what the crowd demands. The temptation to abandon Jack Phillips to his fate will be great. But, as Christians, we must decide now to resist that temptation and instead prepare to give a personal defense of the human right to live according to religious conscience.

Happily, the correct spiritual course aligns with the correct legal course. The First Amendment requires that we defend Jack Phillips’s ability to live according to what he understands God to require. The First Amendment’s protection of religious conscience does not turn on whether anyone else agrees with his decision not to create the cake. Indeed, the First Amendment particularly protects minority religious dissenters from government coercion.

On this 500th anniversary of the Reformation and its emphasis on the supremacy of individual conscience in religious matters—an emphasis that the Founders embedded in the First Amendment—it is fitting that the Court yet again protect the foundational right of all citizens to live according to their religious consciences.



Kim Colby is Director of the Center for Law & Religious Freedom at Christian Legal Society. She is a graduate of Harvard Law School. Kim has represented religious groups in numerous appellate cases, including two cases heard by the United States Supreme Court, as well as dozens of amicus briefs in federal and state courts. She was also involved in congressional passage of the Equal Access Act in 1984.



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## THE LAW OF CHARITY

*Providing Legal Services to the Poor*

BY KEN LIU

When people think of the word “charity,” *legal services* is generally not the first thing that comes to mind. Just mention “legal services” in the context of charity, and you are likely to be met with blank stares.

Yet legal services are often what the poor need the most.

While the root causes of homelessness and poverty are complex, legal issues clearly are significant, yet seldom recognized, facets of the problem. Take for example, Rafael, a restaurant worker who barely makes enough to pay rent for his family of five. He discovered that the leaky plumbing in his apartment has caused mold, which is harmful to his child with respiratory problems. Despite repeated requests for help, the landlord neither fixed the plumbing nor remediated the mold. Not having any legal help, Rafael simply withheld his rent payment. Of course, rather than inducing the landlord to actually fix the problem, this results in—you guessed it—eviction. And given the utter lack of affordable housing in

Rafael’s city, he and his family now have no place to live. Sadly, a simple letter to the landlord from an attorney might have kept his family from homelessness.

In nearly 70% of the approximately 17 million lawsuits filed each year, defendants are unrepresented by counsel.<sup>1</sup> This means that each year, nearly 12 million defendants face the daunting task of navigating the legal system on their own (and this does not even include plaintiffs fighting to rectify grievances against them). Yet many of these *pro se* litigants face dire life situations such as evictions, foreclosures, and aggressive debt collections—matters that lead to homelessness and poverty.

Despite these staggering statistics, most courts provide little to no help to *pro se* litigants. The American legal system was simply not designed for unrepresented parties.

Lawyers, of all people, ought to understand the importance of legal help as a form of charity. Although “*pro se*” literally

means “representing oneself,” it is an obvious falsehood that ordinary citizens can “represent” themselves. Rather, as former California Court of Appeals Justice Earl Johnson, Jr. once said, “Poor people have access to the American courts in the same sense that Christians had access to the lions when they were dragged into a Roman arena.” Unrepresented litigants lose cases at a considerably higher rate than individuals who are represented by counsel. If you are a survivor of domestic violence, for example, your odds of obtaining a protective order fall by over 50% if you are without a lawyer.<sup>2</sup>

We *Christian* lawyers should understand most the importance of legal help, as well as our Biblical mandate to provide legal help to the poor. God commands us to “Defend the weak and the fatherless; uphold the cause of the poor and the oppressed” (Psalm 82:3) and to “Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow” (Isaiah 1:17).

Anyone can ladle soup in a soup kitchen or hammer nails for Habitat for Humanity. As important as those forms of help are, only one type of person can provide legal help—lawyers. In every one of the 50 states, lawyers have a monopoly on providing legal services. If we lawyers don’t donate our legal skills and knowledge to the poor, *no one else can*.

So, we have both a Biblical command to serve the poor, as well as a professional ethical obligation. The American Bar Association’s Model Rule of Professional Conduct 6.1 calls on every lawyer to:

1. render at least 50 hours of pro bono service each year, with a majority of those hours to persons of limited means (or organizations that serve persons of limited means); and
2. voluntarily contribute financial support to organizations that provide legal services to persons of limited means.

Donations of our legal skills and time are far more valuable than other forms of charity because we possess a commodity no other Americans have. Only lawyers are can donate legal services.

**In nearly 70% of the lawsuits filed each year, defendants are unrepresented by counsel, and many of these *pro se* litigants face dire life situations. Despite these staggering statistics, most courts provide little to no help to *pro se* litigants.**

For some attorneys, their economic calculus might lead to the conclusion that it is more cost-effective to donate their money to support legal aid attorneys to do the work than to donate their own pro bono time. If that conclusion makes sense for you, then by all means, please do it! We need to support legal aid organizations to provide greater representation of low-income clients. And of all people, it is we fellow attorneys who should be giving the most to support such programs. Christian Legal Society has a network of over 40 Christian legal aid programs, comprising about 130 clinic sites (*see* [www.ChristianLegalAid.org](http://www.ChristianLegalAid.org) for the Christian Legal Aid Directory). All of these programs rely on the generosity of faithful donors to support their work.

In our selfish nature, we always ask (in our heads, if not out loud), “So, what’s in it for me?” God knows this about our hearts, so he has provided a response. “Whoever is kind to the poor lends to the Lord, and he will reward them for what they have done” (Proverbs 19:17). What a great promise this is!



Ken Liu is the Director of Christian Legal Aid at Christian Legal Society. If you are interested in donating your time or money to support Christian Legal Aid, please contact Ken at [kliu@clsnet.org](mailto:kliu@clsnet.org).

#### END NOTES

- 1 National Center for State Courts, 2015 Civil Justice Project: Landscape of Civil Litigation of State Courts, p.6.
- 2 Jed S. Rakoff, “Why You Won’t Get Your Day in Court,” New York Review of Books, Nov. 24, 2016.

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Jennifer Patrick,  
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Chairman of the Board

Invariably, the onset of Fall causes me to reflect on how quickly another year is flying past. This year, “fall” held a literal meaning for me after I recently slipped and fell, my head striking a concrete wall and a fire extinguisher, in rapid succession. While in the E.R., I was instructed to watch for changes to my vision, hearing, coordination, balance, and speech. Gingerly moving my head, I marveled at it. One jolt, and many valuably interconnected senses of the body might all have been impacted.

When visiting CLS chapters, as I love to do, I often remark that Christian lawyers are like “legal ligaments” in the body of Christ. Ligaments have the role of providing strength and support for the entire body, every member playing a valuable role. Ephesians 4:16 describes the spiritual working of this body, having Christ as our head, “from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.” Regardless of how brightly or how dimly we may view our personal contributions as regards the practice of law, each of us yet forms an irreplaceable part of the body of Christ. Every ministry of CLS—whether our religious freedom advocacy, legal aid, or ministry to lawyers and law students—is made possible through the dedication, involvement, and support of our members. Each is effectively and spiritually knit together within the body of Christ and impacts our growth as a whole, whether we are consciously aware of it or not.

Thanks to you, our members and supporters, the impact of CLS is increasing nationwide. Christian Legal Aid and clinic locations are expanding. Our Center for Law and Religious Freedom is growing. Many of you are discipling others and sharing

Jesus with those who don’t know Him. Many lead and encourage the CLS chapter in your city, or donate countless hours of legal services for people in need. Perhaps you are providing financial and prayer support for CLS while serving within your church as an elder, Sunday School teacher, or church board member.

Just as serving others is naturally evinced in the life of the Christian lawyer, so is the necessity for rest. Lawyers are known for burning the candle at both ends. Many a family vacation is postponed ... again. As our case files pile up and the late nights lengthen, we find it increasingly difficult to make time for rest. Yet Jesus instructed His disciples that rest from long periods of service was good, and necessary (Mark 6:31). Sometimes we must be proactive in making it happen.

I hope you will mark your calendars and come away to a CLS Winter or Spring Retreat, whether it’s the Northeast, Northwest, or Midwest Retreat, or the new Southern CLS Cruise to the Caribbean. CLS conferences and retreats are designed to provide a place to come away to find rest and refreshment with fellow attorneys, with your spouse, and your family. For those who simply can’t fit a retreat into your schedule at this time, may the Lord bring a special time of rest and refreshment directly to you.

Attorneys in Christ, be encouraged. When tempted to exclaim, “But Lord, I am all alone,” may we call to mind the Lord’s swift assurance in 1 Kings 19:18: “Yet I have reserved seven thousand in Israel, whose knees have not bowed to Baal.” Know that CLS is standing with you, and that you are linked with thousands upon thousands of Christian attorneys all across America, as together we seek, above all things, to faithfully serve the Lord, and one other.

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