

When Helping Hurts video summaries

Video 1: Reconsidering the meaning of poverty (16:57)

Isaiah 58:10

‘...and if you spend yourselves on behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday.’

Video 1 opens by identifying a feeling that many of us experience and that is that when we see poverty – whether locally or globally – we want to do something to help alleviate the suffering. However, the video goes on to consider whether our well-intended deeds could actually be doing more harm than good, for the poor, and for ourselves. The video invites us to think about how we define poverty, and then shares how others around the world define poverty. Whilst we often think of poverty as a lack of something in material terms, for others its definition is much wider and includes emotional, social and psychological conditions as much as, if not more so, than material items.

We know that we have a relational God, who has created us in His image to be relational beings – whether this is in relationship with God, ourselves, others, or the planet. However, after the fall, all of these relationships became broken. And broken relationships create broken systems. We forget our ‘human-ness’. Tackling a lack of material items is just the tip of the iceberg of poverty.

Discussion questions:

- *What was your definition of poverty before watching this video?*
- *What surprised you in this video? What stood out to you in this video?*
- *How does this definition of poverty affect the way you enter into this trip experience?*

Video 2: Seeing God at work (11:44)

This video considers the question: How can I best help?

“Poverty is a set of relationships that don’t work, but they don’t just not work for the materially poor, they also don’t work for us.” This video looks at the relationships we have with God, ourselves, others and the planet. The video suggests that the way in which the materially poor experience brokenness in these relationships is different to the way in which the materially rich experience them, and this is a bad mix.

Amongst the materially rich, broken relationships with self often lead to feelings of pride and/or superiority. The materially poor’s relationship with self is often around feelings of shame and/or inferiority. As the materially poor become more passive, the materially rich become more proud. As a result, the way the materially poor are treated confirms to them that there isn’t a way out, known as ‘conditioned hopelessness’.

The video concludes by saying that if poverty is a result of broken relationships, then alleviation of poverty is about reconciling and restoring these relationships – for all of us.

Discussion questions

- *How does it feel to be challenged in this way about our own brokenness?*
- *Are your churches accessible to the materially poor in your communities?*
- *Discuss the statement from the video: ‘We must walk humbly with the poor as Jesus Christ transforms us both’.*

Video 3: Understanding why good intentions are not enough (12:46)

This video looks at the Relief, Rehabilitation and Development model.

This model suggests that all people in poverty require relief, but a study conducted by The Hunger Project in 1980 showed that around only 10% of the one billion people in poverty across the world actually require relief. Having only this type of response to poverty doesn't get to the heart of the problem, and might actually hinder future development.

We can create systems of 'Paternalism', habitually doing for people and providing for people things they can do and provide for themselves. The video describes how we miss the understanding that helping is a long-term process that requires investment and perseverance from us, and that it is so important to reach people's hearts, not just their hands and their practical needs.

The video ends with two examples of mission trips. The goal of the first mission trip is to build houses, which it does. The goal of the second mission trip is to focus on the process and restoration of relationships for everybody. These examples are given so that we can see that how you do the work is just as important as what you do.

Discussion questions

- *What do you think about the point that people prefer doing short bursts of simple, pre-packaged good deeds when it comes to helping those in poverty, rather than investing in long-term, potentially difficult solutions?*
- *Discuss the two mission trips talked about towards the end of the video. What are the main differences in the process and the outcome of these trips? What is the difference between having a product as the goal and having the process as the goal?*
- *How does this affect what our trip will look like?*

Video 4: Joining God's work (15:36)

This video reminds us that we are joining in with work that God is already doing, that is already happening in communities. It's not just about seeing what is lacking in a community and assuming that solutions are going to come from outside of it. This way of thinking erodes a sense of dignity and purpose in the materially poor. We are all made in God's image, and all have something to bring to the table.

"Simply asking people to consider their gifts is poverty alleviation." Asking this question shows value and gives dignity. It puts the focus on the process, not the end product.

The video suggests that it's important to look at who else is already working in a community, and consider how we can work together and what we can add to the mix. What does it mean to come alongside them and help them succeed? The use of local resources, assets and skills is what brings sustainability to projects.

Discussion questions

- *Where have I been guilty of just seeing the lack and the deficits within a community?*
- *Can I think of a time where I have thought that my new ideas are superior to work that is already taking place in a community?*
- *What does it really mean to 'empower' an individual or community?*

Video 5: Fostering change (11:50)

This video looks at how development is fundamentally about change... so how do people actually change? People cannot experience lasting change without the power of the Holy Spirit, so prayer is central to the development process. There are also some common patterns to how people experience change. These are usually centred around an individual realising that they want something different in life – a 'trigger to change'. These triggers can be:

- A crisis
- A burden, getting to the point where you can't take it anymore

- Seeing another possibility

These triggers make people reflect and then act and implement. Development can only happen with people who are willing to change.

The video raises the importance of asking the question, ‘What can I do for you?’. Asking the right questions can empower people to think more of themselves.

One of the prime features of poverty is lack of access to social networks. The video suggests that we under appreciate this because we have access to networks. If poverty is rooted in broken relationships, it is not solved by giving someone money. The problem is solved through walking alongside someone relationally, and empowering them.

Change is a continuum. Some people don’t see that there is a problem, whereas others recognise something is wrong but don’t see it as their responsibility to pursue change. It is important to note that problems are often not about people’s choices – they can also be because of broken systems. Another position on the change continuum is being open to change but being fearful that ideas won’t work. The video encourages us to listen carefully to these people, as they might know something about the situation that we don’t understand.

Discussion questions

- *How can we be encouraging voices in the community?*
- *Just how rich are our social networks? Spend some time thinking about your networks.*
- *Are we humble and open to learning about others’ worlds as we walk alongside them?*

Video 6: Moving forward (15:03)

This video looks at what we do next, and how we can support local churches and local organisations who God has already placed in the communities and who are on the frontline of ministry.

There are some key principles for healthy partnerships between our churches, and churches and organisations who are on the ground:

- The partnership should have a **relational focus** – and not just be about accomplishing a task.
- There should be a recognition that we need them, it’s not just that they need us. They have gifts and abilities that we don’t have that are profoundly important. We are **interdependent**.
- There should be **shared control** – one party in the partnership shouldn’t control everything.
- Both parties should have **equal** skin in the game, with everyone contributing to the project in some way. It should have some sort of cost for people.

The video leaves us with what it says is the most important thing to take away:

“The first step the Western Church needs to take to effectively minister to the poor, whether at home or abroad, is to repent. Repentance of pride, a repentance of our material understanding of the world...” We must understand that we are all broken people but that Jesus brings healing and can change the lives of poor people – including us.

Discussion questions

- *What presence do we bring when we visit a community as an outsider? Who are we? Who do we represent?*
- *How do we partner well? How are our churches partnering?*
- *What did you think about the process of just ‘hanging out’? Would you be a ‘patient donor’?*
- *What do you think differently about now as a result of watching this series of videos?*
- *Read Colossians 1 and discuss together.*

- *Spend some time thinking about the quote from the video about repentance.*