

ECONOMICS FACT SHEET

KEY FACTS:

- Christians must act on God's commands to help those who cannot help themselves
- Capitalism is the best strategy for defeating poverty
- Capitalism takes human nature into account

KEY VERSES:

Exodus 20:15,17	Acts 4:32-37; 20:35	2 Thessalonians 3:7-13
Proverbs 11:24-26; 16:8;	1 Corinthians 16:2	1 Timothy 5-6; 6:6-10,
17:5; 19:17; 21:13; 22:9,	2 Corinthians 8-9	17-19
28:27; 29:7; 31:8-9	Philippians 4:12-13	James 1:27; 2:14-17
Ecclesiastes 5:19		1 John 3:16-18

KEY QUOTES:

"Christians need to care about the poor: that is one side of Christian social concern. But they also need to become informed about the relevant philosophical, political, and economic issues that ground wise and efficient policies to help the poor. Unfortunately, many Christians act as though the only thing that counts is intention. But when good intentions are not wedded to sound economic theory, good intentions can often result in actions that produce consequences directly opposite to those we planned."¹

"Just before the collapse of socialism in the Soviet bloc, Lutheran sociologist Peter Berger wrote a marvelous book about the newly industrializing countries of East Asia. These 'little tigers,' or 'little dragons' as they're sometimes called, are part of a capitalist revolution and, as Berger documents, they are defeating poverty at an amazing rate. He compares them to the Third World nations that have tried socialism for the last three decades and finds that none of the latter have grown, and indeed, that most have moved backward."²

"[A]ll men have different gifts, talents, interests, and abilities. Left free, they will exercise those in different ways and will produce different fruits. The only way to arrive at equal fruits is to equalize behavior; and that requires robbing men of liberty, making them slaves."³

"If poverty (the lack of money) really were what ails the poor, supplying vast amounts of money surely would alleviate it. But after thirty years of Great Society-style, 'War on Poverty' welfare programs—programs that have transferred (in 1990 dollars) more than \$3.6 trillion to the poor—poverty is still winning. We ought to think about that for a minute: In the last thirty years, we gave a million dollars to America's poor nearly four million times over, yet all the while poverty got worse. If the money earmarked for poverty relief in this year's federal budget alone were given to the poor directly, we would have enough funds to raise every man, woman, and child in America above the poverty line and have a cool \$60 billion left over to celebrate our victory."

Nearly 40 percent of those the U.S. government defines as 'poor' own their own homes—homes that have more living space than that enjoyed by most middle class Europeans. 'Poor' ought to retain its earlier definition: the lack of food, shelter, or clothing

¹ Ronald Nash, *Poverty and Wealth: The Christian Debate Over Capitalism*, (Westchester, IL: Crossway, 1986), p. 9.

² K.E. Grubbs, "A New 'Liberation Theology' for the World: Faith and the Free Market," *Imprimis*, March 1991, p. 4.

³ E. Calvin Beisner, *Prosperity and Poverty: The Compassionate use of Resources in a World of Scarcity* (Westchester, IL: Crossway, 1988), p. 54.

And while we are engaged in the task of redefining, we ought to remind ourselves that the definition of compassion is not increased control of private income by government."⁴

"The century-old question—Does any given 'scheme of help...make demands on men to give themselves to their brethren?'—is still the right one to ask. Each of us needs to ask that question not in the abstract, but personally. We need to ask ourselves: Are we offering not coerced silver, but our lives? If we talk of crisis pregnancies, are we actually willing to provide a home to a pregnant young woman? If we talk of abandoned children, are we actually willing to adopt a child? Most of our twentieth-century schemes, based on having someone else take action, are proven failures. It's time to learn from the warm hearts and hard heads of earlier times, and to bring that understanding into our own lives."⁵

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⁴ Michael Bauman, "The Dangerous Samaritans: How We Unintentionally Injure the Poor," *Imprimis* 23, no.1 (1994): 3–5.

⁵ Marvin Olasky, *The Tragedy of American Compassion* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Gateway, 1992), pp. 232–33.

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