

Regardless of Poverty's Cause, Christians Give Most to Poor

Louis DeBroux · Aug. 9, 2017



The Leftmedia are happy to hammer Christians for thinking the poor have some personal responsibility. Progressive Democrats and the media love to paint conservative Christians as mean-spirited Bible-thumpers, and a recent poll from The Washington Post/Kaiser Family Foundation is the latest tool to justify such slanderous claims. According to the poll, which gauged opinions on the root causes of poverty, 46% of Christians (and 53% of white evangelical Protestants) blame poverty on a lack of effort, compared to 29% of non-Christians who feel this way. Conversely, of the atheist/agnostic/non-religious polled, 65% blamed circumstances for poverty.

The poll was the impetus for “journalists” like Newsweek’s Jason Le Miere to take Christians to task for allegedly being un-Christian. Le Miere quotes the Bible, where Christ commands His followers to care for the poor — though, one wonders, if he would have quoted the Bible in an article on, say, abortion or marriage.

Le Miere makes but a single reference to the biblical commandment to labor before going on to cite the passages about caring for the poor. However, therein lies the critical distinction. In Genesis 3:19, the Lord declared to Adam, “By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread,” and in Exodus 20, the Lord commands us to labor for six days before resting on the Sabbath. The Apostle Paul instructed, “If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat” (2 Thessalonians 3:6-13).

Because leftists generally use the Bible only to criticize Christians, they don’t grasp that the two commandments — that a man labor for his daily bread, and give to the poor — are not exclusive but rather work in conjunction with one another. Yes, we must help the poor, but the poor also have an obligation to first labor in their own behalf.

Furthermore, charity is an individual, voluntary act. If we see a person in need and give to him of the fruits of our labor, of our own free will, that is charity. If we see someone in need and hire a government agent to put a gun to *someone else's* head and force them to give, that's not charity but legalized extortion. When the rich young ruler asked Christ how to obtain heaven, beyond keeping the commandments, he was told to sell all he possessed and give to the poor. When the ruler left discouraged, desiring heaven but unwilling to part with his riches, we can note that Christ did not send his apostles, or Roman centurions, to attack the young prince, rob him, and give his treasure to the poor.

The poll sets up a false dichotomy, as The Federalist's Jessica Burke points out: "Poverty is too complex to easily isolate one cause. There are some decisions and behaviors that can lead to a person being poor, and there are some circumstances that lead to it as well. When it comes to poverty, there is no one-size-fits-all answer to what is causing it and what will alleviate it."

It is undeniable that behavior plays an enormous role in avoiding or escaping poverty. Certain behaviors almost guarantee a life of poverty. As even the left-leaning Brookings Institute notes, the vast majority of Americans can avoid poverty by finishing high school, getting a job, and waiting until age 21 to get married and have children — in that order.

To those in poverty, and especially those working to escape poverty, Christians have a religious and moral imperative to be charitable, and all accounts show they do just that. Despite the portrayal by Le Miere and other leftists of Christians as judgmental and miserly, the truth is conservative Christians are the most charitable people to be found.

Faith aside, nationally speaking, Americans in general are the most generous people on Earth, giving, as a percentage of income, more than twice as much as Canadians and Britons, and *20 times more* than Germans or Italians. Additionally, with the exception of the lowest income bracket, more than half of all Americans of every single income bracket give to charity. This goes for the oft-vilified Top 1%, who account for more than a third of all charitable donations.

Further undermining the narrative of the heartless Christian is the fact that, according to the well-respected Philanthropy Chronicle, conservative and religious states are the most generous givers. Using data from 2012 and that year's election map, 17 of the most generous states voted for Mitt Romney, while 15 of the least charitable 17 went for Barack Obama. Conservatives tend to be generous with their own money, while leftists are "generous" with other people's money. From a religious standpoint, heavily Mormon Utah, with a giving rate of 6.56%, was the most charitable, while New Hampshire, where less than a third of residents even believe there is a God, gave away just 1.74% of income.

So what does it all mean? It means that poverty can be caused by laziness, circumstances or oppression (Venezuelan socialism, anyone?). It means Christians believe that hard work and making good choices will keep most people out of poverty. It also means that Christians are far more generous than their secular counterparts when it comes to personally sacrificing to meet the needs of the poor and downtrodden.

And despite leftists deliberately distorting biblical teachings, that is exactly what Christ taught.