

# FOR THE LOVE OF GOD + -

## BEING POOR IN THE ANCIENT WORLD

This segment comes from **EPISODE 3: RICH + POOR.**

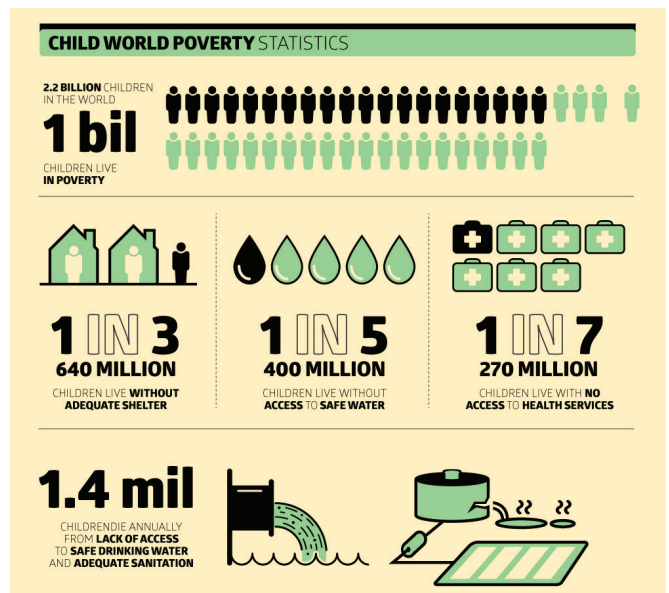
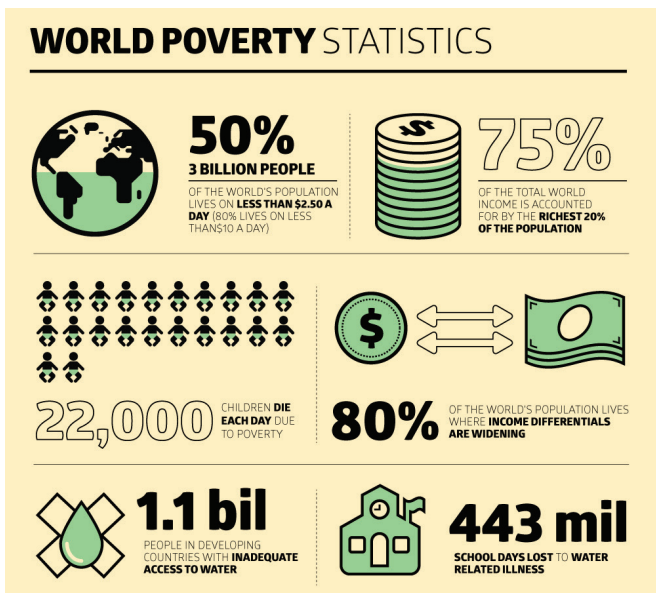
From decadent medieval popes to modern televangelists with private jets, religion and money can make for an unsavoury mix. But why do we think of charity – care for the poor and the sick – as a good thing in the first place? People in the Graeco-Roman world didn't think so: they mostly thought the poor and suffering deserved what they got. This segment looks at the contrast between early Christian attitudes and actions towards the poor, and the attitude of people in ancient Greece and Rome.

### THEME QUESTION

Do you associate the church with care for the poor? Why or why not?

### ENGAGE

1. Share about a time in your life when you've been struck or confronted by poverty.
2. Imagine living on only \$2 per day. Using the website of a supermarket, create a meal plan for one week with only \$2 per day for food. How does this compare to your current diet?
3. Look at this infographic on world poverty from [infographic.ly](http://infographic.ly) ([cpx.video/povertyinfographic](http://cpx.video/povertyinfographic)). What is your reaction to this infographic? What particularly stands out to you?



4. On the lines below, mark how much you agree or disagree with the following statements.

Statement	Agree	Disagree
Poor people deserve to be poor		
Those who are wealthy have a responsibility to help the poor		
Giving to the poor is only worthwhile if you receive something in return		

## UNDERSTAND AND EVALUATE




**WATCH** the segment: “Being poor in the ancient world” ([cpx.video/poverty](https://cpx.video/poverty))

1. Read the following quotes from Plato and Plotinus that describe their attitudes towards the poor.
  - a. Write a one-sentence summary of each quote.
  - b. What stands out to you about these views?


"The man who suffers hunger or the like is not the man who deserves pity, but only the virtuous person who experiences some misfortune. There shall be no begging in our State; and if any man attempts to beg, and to collect a livelihood by ceaseless pleas, the market-stewards shall expel him from the market, and the Board of city-stewards from the city, and in any other district they shall be driven across the border by the country-stewards, to the end that the land be wholly purged of such a creature."

PLATO



"The rational principle does not look only at the present on each occasion but at the cycles of time before, and also at the future: making slaves out of those who were bad masters before; and, if men used wealth badly, making them poor; and causing those who killed unjustly to be killed in their turn. There is certainly no accident in a man's becoming a slave. We must conclude that the universal order is forever something of this kind."

PLOTINUS



2. Why did Greek and Roman ethical thinkers criticise the early Christians for their actions towards the poor?
3. Describe the motivations of emperors and wealthy benefactors who gave to the poor.
4. What were the differences between the Stoics and the Christians in the way that each group cared for the poor?

Stoics	Christians

5. What are the “those things” that Teresa Morgan is talking about in this quote? Do you agree with her?

THE CHRISTIAN INSISTENCE THAT IF THOSE THINGS ARE GOOD THEY ARE GOOD FOR EVERYBODY AND THEY ARE ALWAYS GOOD, I THINK THAT WAS TRANSFORMATIONAL FOR THE ROMAN WORLD AND THEN FOR THE CHRISTIAN WORLD, AND IS PERHAPS THE SINGLE GREATEST CONTRIBUTION OF CHRISTIANITY TO PUBLIC LIFE.

TERESA MORGAN

 **BIBLE FOCUS**

**READ Proverbs 14:31, 19:17, 21:13 and 29:7.**

1. What do these proverbs show us about ...
  - a. God’s relationship to the poor?
  - b. How God’s people should treat the poor?

**READ 1 John 3:16-17.**

2. What does John call his readers to do?
3. What motivation does he give them?
4. What do you think is the difference between loving with “words or speech” and “with actions and in truth”?


**APPLY**

1. Who are some of the poor and needy in Australian society today? Make a list of at least three groups.

1.
2.
3.

2. Brainstorm a few ways your school could care for one of these groups.
3. Imagine your school is holding an event to help, or raise money for, a group of the poor and needy in Australia. Write a text description and choose a cover image for a Facebook event page promoting this event. In your description, you might like to reference the video or a Bible passage used in this lesson.


**EXTEND**

1. Research an Australian faith-based organisation that is fighting to end global poverty. Examples include TEAR, World Vision, Baptist World Aid, and Caritas (plus many more!). Create a PowerPoint or Prezi presentation outlining the work they do, and how their faith provides the basis/motivation for their work.