

### **A prayer for this week:**

Father,  
I am poor. Though You were rich, for me, You became poor. Yet, You are my prosperity, my greatest treasure and my true reward. Help me to understand poverty like You do—as anything that degrades my humanity and limits my calling to bear Your image in its fullest potential. Forgive me for times when my life has declared, “I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing.” I did not realize that on my own I was wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. You have counseled me to buy from You the gold refined by fire so that I may be rich, with white garments so that I may clothe the shame of my nakedness and salve to anoint my eyes, so that I may see. I pray against poverty in all its forms: The lack of material needs, lack of education, lack of friendship, lack of morality, lack of opportunity, lack of justice, lack of mercy and love. I pray against the poverty of spirit, the lack of integrity, lack of forgiveness, lack of identity, lack of meaning, lack of voice, lack of beauty, lack of peace and joy. Free me, free us, from the poverty born from shame, from pride, from isolation, from doubt and fear. I am poor... Help me, in You, to renew in myself and others the dignity of those who are made to bear the image of God. For it is in You that I am rich. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

### **Monday:**

How would you define poverty? At Jacob’s Well, we define poverty as: “Anything we lack that keeps us from living fully as an image-bearer of God.” How does this make you feel? The truth is, each of us is poor in at least some aspect of our life. For example, we may find ourselves unable to live fully as an image-bearer of Christ because we live with a lack of morality, identity, meaning, purpose, and/or humility. We may fool ourselves into thinking we don’t need God at all, which exposes our lack of spirituality. We may not fully live as an image-bearer of Christ in how we express our emotions, how we treat others, how we use our time, and in how we parent. Some other examples might be the ways in which we live with a lack of joy, thanksgiving, perspective and contentment. The truth is, we can have internal poverty even when everything on the surface of our life seems to be going well. Sometimes our material wealth can fool us into thinking we have it all together when the truth is that we are broken and in need of God’s healing. Where is poverty exposing itself in your life today? *In what ways are you poor?* Remember, poverty is anything we lack that keeps us from living fully as an image-bearer of God.

**Read:** 2 Corinthians 8:8-9

**Read:** Revelations 3:17-18

Spend time in prayer over where poverty is exposing itself in your life today.

### **Tuesday:**

1 John 3:17 “But if anyone has the world’s goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God’s love abide in him?” As we read this Scripture, we may immediately look to ourselves as the means for providing income, food, healthcare, and housing for the poor. However, a problem arises out of this thinking—not from our desire to love and help, but from our perspective. Our desire to love and help is correct, but our perspective may blind us and keep us from truly understanding the perspective of those we want to help. For those struggling with a shortage of income, food, healthcare and housing, their material poverty can create a perspective of a lack of dignity, opportunity and justice. They

may feel they have no voice, no power, no freedom and no hope. They may have an absence of healthy relationships, leaving them alone and without encouragement and support from family and friends. When God exposes a need to us, we must ask for His direction. He understands the perspective of those He is asking us to help. It could be that instead of income, we give them our time in order to teach a trade or skill. It might be we create an avenue for someone struggling with hunger to generate food for themselves not only for today, but for the future. Thus the saying, “If you give a man a fish, you feed him for a day. If you teach a man to fish, you feed him for a lifetime.” Maybe if the person lacks healthy relationships, God wants us to become their friend, a person of influence and support for their journey.

**Read:** John 13:34-35

God wants us to love one another. To do this well, we must have His perspective. We need to pray for His will and ask Him to show us His perspective as well as the perspective of the person/persons He is asking us to help. As God opens our eyes beyond our own perspective, we pray and ask the Holy Spirit to guide our actions. We also ask Jesus to give us His best next steps so that we can compassionately and graciously love and help people in the most effective way possible. As you end your time in prayer, how is your own perspective changing? How is God speaking to you? Pray for God’s wisdom and direction to live life well as His disciple, specifically in the ways He would have you help others.

### **Wednesday:**

Write out the definition of poverty from day one of this week’s devotion.

As Christ’s disciples, we do not want to focus merely on the problem of poverty. Instead, we are to work to help people discover that they are image-bearers of God. With what we have learned as a church over the last four weeks, how is work one way in which we can help people discover that they are image-bearers of God? As you think about your own life, how do you empower people to discover that they are image-bearers of God through work? If you realize that you haven’t lived this out, what steps can you take to do so? How do you promote and support just workplaces and systems that create fairness and opportunity for people to be able to discover that they are image-bearers of God?

**Read:** Ephesians 2:8-10

We have extraordinary value as human beings because we are sons and daughters of God. Spend time in prayer, thanking God for His love and for His grace. Thank Him that we are His workmanship, bearing His image. Ask Him how He wants you to help people discover that they are image-bearers of God through the good work He has for you (and for them) to do.

### **Thursday:**

The vision statement at Jacob’s Well is, “Wherever we are on our journey, we will take steps together to know and become like Jesus.” As we walk together, we understand that each of us is broken. We also understand that Jesus can bring healing to us no matter where we are on our journey. We never want to judge another person for where they are on their journey. Instead, we see our own brokenness and we ask God how He wants to work through us to help one another. A book called **When Helping Hurts** says this: “While we are all poor in the sense that we are all experiencing less than the fullness that God intended for us at creation, the materially poor face a daily struggle to survive that creates feelings of helplessness,

anxiety, suffocation, shame, and desperation that are simply unparalleled in most of our lives.” Have you ever experienced being materially poor? What was your life like at the time? Maybe you are experiencing this in your life. What is most difficult for you right now? If you have never experienced being materially poor, imagine what a day in this type of poverty might be like. Ask yourself these questions: Where will you find shelter? How will you feed yourself and your family? If you go to ask someone for help, how might you feel? How would it feel if you knew the person you asked for help thought less of you?

**Read:** James 2:2-4

Scriptures tell us that material wealth is deceitful.

**Read:** Matthew 13:22

**Read:** Luke 12:20-21

**Read:** 1 Timothy 6:8-10

Has material wealth ever caused deceit in your life? In what ways? If wealth has made you feel superior to others, this is an example of its deceit. The truth is, we all need to understand that we are broken people. As God’s children, as those created in God’s image, we need to see each other as equals no matter where we are on our journeys and we need to be willing to learn from one another. Tomorrow we will study what Scripture tells us about the things we can learn from the materially poor. As you end your quiet time today, pray for God’s perspective on wealth. Ask Him to uncover where wealth may be bringing deceit into your life. If you are materially poor and struggling, ask God for your next step. Ask Him to reveal who you are to reach out to.

**Friday:**

Yesterday we studied how wealth can be deceitful. One of the ways wealth is deceitful is that it tells us we are better than those who are materially poor.

**Read:** Mark 12:41-44

The widow in Mark 12:41-44 demonstrates true discipleship. As she brings her offering, her attitude is one of worship and trust. We learn so much through her example. In fact, her example is one for each of us to follow. Ponder on your life today. Does your life reveal a heart of discipleship like this widow’s? Why or why not?

Does your attitude reflect worship and trust? If not, why? What is holding you back from fully following Jesus?

What else do you learn from the widow and her example?

Maybe you want to follow God with everything you have like the widow did, but you don’t know how. If this is you, simply tell Him and ask Him to help you. Ask Him to help you see the true meaning of poverty—remember, it is anything we lack that keeps us from living fully as an image-bearer of God.

As we end this series, what has God shown you? To what next step do you feel God is leading you? End your time in prayer, asking God to give you a heart like the widow’s. Ask Him to help you be a person who looks to Him first, and then to others, for His wisdom, direction, guidance and love. Praise Him for how He is changing you to be more and more like Jesus. Praise Him for continuing to show you how to live your life well.

# NOTHING ORDINARY

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