

# CHRISTIAN STUDY GUIDE

2019 HUNGER REPORT

## BACK to BASICS:

How to End Hunger by 2030



(the solution)



To learn more about how to end hunger, visit [hungerreport.org](http://hungerreport.org)



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# 2019 HUNGER REPORT STUDY GUIDE

This Christian Study Guide for the 2019 Hunger Report, *Back to Basics: How to End Hunger by 2030*, offers a biblically-based tool to explore God's call to protect vulnerable people in the 21st century. The guide summarizes the report's overall themes and provides discussion questions and group activities on select topics in the report. It is focused on galvanizing our faith into action. The guide also includes steps to help discussion leaders prepare for the study.

## Study Session Outline:

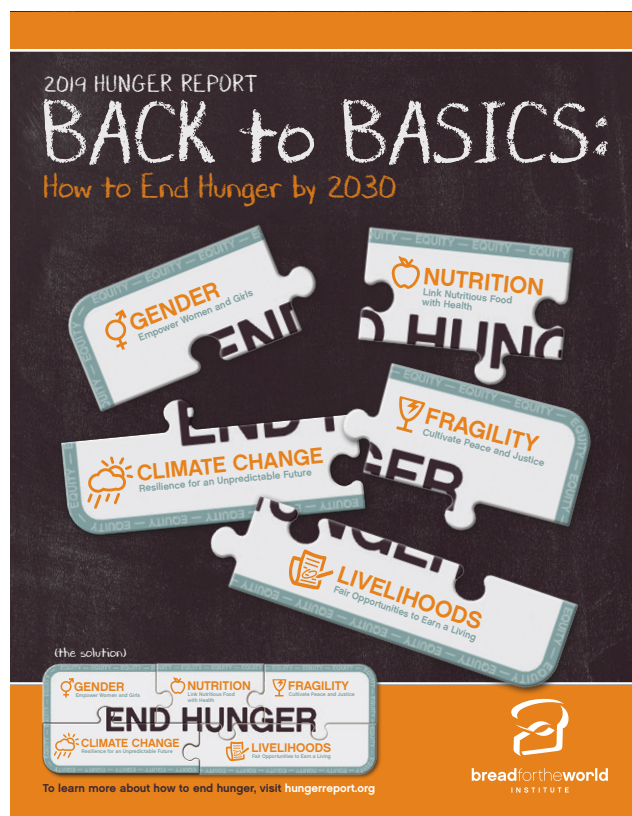
- Scripture: a biblical reflection related to topics covered in the report, followed by some questions to consider.
- Issue: a summary of the report.
- Application: Activities to engage group members by using content from the Hunger Report ([www.hungerreport.org](http://www.hungerreport.org)) applied to one's own life and the wider community, including communities of faith.

## Planning Your Study

As discussion leader, your role is to guide the process of group reading and discussion related to the report, but also to be open to learning with others. While you are not expected to be an expert on the issues in the report, it is recommended that you read the full report prior to the session.

Here are some key steps for serving as a discussion leader:

- Review the study session and refer to the 2019 Hunger Report for further details.
- Consider your own goals for the class and feel free to adapt the guide to enhance the experience for your group. The guide is designed for Christians of many theological and political viewpoints.
- Confirm the date, time, and location of your meeting and invite participants.
- Bring a Bible to the session. Encourage participants to bring additional translations to enrich the biblical reflection. You will almost certainly discover your own powerful connection to the biblical text.
- Bring session materials for each participant and have a flip-chart or whiteboard available for activities and discussions. Consider giving participants the session outline below, or your revision, to help them follow along. Some sessions include an activity that requires access to the Internet. If your group does not have Internet access but you choose to do that activity, have someone print out relevant pages or data ahead of time.
- Plan to include prayer time, especially time for remembering those most affected by the topics that you discuss. The session as outlined may take more than 90 minutes, but it may be modified to meet your scheduling needs. After familiarizing yourself with the outline, adapt the activities to best serve the needs of your group.



## Group Expectations

If you haven't led an adult learning group before, or it has been a while, here are some suggestions:

- Adults want to know what they're going to discuss. Be clear and focused about your goals and your schedule.
- As you begin, help participants make connections with each other—through introductions and a short response to a question like “What do you hope for from our time together?” Including time for prayer at each session also helps build community.
- Encourage all participants both to speak and to listen. Allow each person who wants to speak to have the time to do so.
- Encourage “I” statements (I feel..., I wonder..., etc.) instead of “you” or “they” statements (you don't know..., they always..., etc.)
- Adults bring lots of experience to the conversation. Find ways to appreciate their need to integrate new material with what they already know, but also keep the conversation focused.
- At the start of the session, invite participants to write down one question they would like to have answered. Before the closing prayer, invite participants to return to their question and write a response—new information or perhaps new questions.



## Facilitating discussion

The study guide includes several discussion questions. To stimulate full participation, consider using one or more of these techniques:

- Divide the group into smaller groups and ask each group to discuss and report on one assigned question. Set a time for the groups to finish, and then ask them to report to the larger group. Ask the people in the larger group to comment on (add to or question) what they're hearing.
- Divide the group into teams of two. Ask each person to consider the question at hand and write down a word, phrase, or other response. Then pair up the two-person teams to create groups of four to broaden the discussion. After another 3 or 4 minutes, invite participants to say what they heard. What key words were used? Is there shared interest in one particular issue?
- Divide the group into teams of three or four. Attach poster paper to the walls, one sheet for each question. Give the teams 8 to 10 minutes to discuss the assigned questions and post their "answers" on the poster paper. Announce when there are 2 minutes left. At the end of the allotted time, review the responses, noting similarities, themes, concerns, or ideas.

## Additional Resources

Your denomination or national group may have additional social policy resources relevant to this Hunger Report. You can reference some of these online at [www.hungerreport.org](http://www.hungerreport.org), or check your group's website. Throughout the year, [www.hungerreport.org](http://www.hungerreport.org) is updated with new stories and statistics you can use. Bread for the World's website, [www.bread.org](http://www.bread.org), has additional resources, including current advocacy campaign materials, found in the activist corner at [www.bread.org/activist](http://www.bread.org/activist). The Alliance to End Hunger, an organization affiliated with Bread for the World and the Institute, has created an Advocacy Playbook that enables organizations and volunteers involved in hunger-related service activities to be effective advocates with political leaders to end hunger. See [www.alliancetoendhunger.org/advocacy-playbook](http://www.alliancetoendhunger.org/advocacy-playbook). Another Bread publication you may find helpful is the Biblical Basis for Advocacy to End Hunger, which can be downloaded or ordered at [www.bread.org/library/biblical-basis-advocacy-end-hunger](http://www.bread.org/library/biblical-basis-advocacy-end-hunger).

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# GENDER

## The Word

Ask for volunteers to read these passages aloud: John 4:1-42

Women in the Bible were often marginalized—their freedom and possibilities were limited by religion and society. Jesus broke with convention by reaching out to a wide variety of women, accepting them as students (Luke 10:38-42), touching those deemed unclean (Matthew 9:20-22), and welcoming them as his followers (Luke 8:1-3). The Gospel according to John tells how Jesus confounded even his disciples by seeking out a Samaritan woman who was alone at a well in the middle of the day.

This was highly unusual for several reasons: Jews did not speak to Samaritans. Men did not speak to women in public. Other women most likely scorned or rejected this woman—women typically went to the well in groups at the beginning and end of the day. Jesus showed that he understood the woman's situation yet also appreciated her enough to give her valuable information. By telling her that he was the messiah, he gave her a powerful resource—information that she could share with others. Sharing it would enable her to be seen in a new light.

- How did the Samaritan woman's life change, and how were others changed, because of her empowerment? What can we learn from Jesus?

- Who is marginalized in your community or seems to lack power? Who is reaching out to them? What is your connection with them?

## The Issue

The Hunger Report's section on Gender explains why ending hunger requires gender equity. According to a 2015 report from the McKinsey Global Institute, discrimination against women and girls costs as much as \$28 trillion in lost global GDP—that's *every year*. On the other hand, adopting policies and programs that empower women is a very effective way of reducing global hunger. Enabling women around the world to acquire a primary and secondary education, as well as better access to land and agricultural inputs, contributes tremendously to food security for families.

One reason is that when women gain access to additional resources, they tend to invest them for the wider good. Research in a number of countries around the world has shown that women invest a greater share of their own income than men do in their children's health and education. For instance, when a woman's income increases, she generally spends the extra money on food for her whole family. Earning an income of her own is important to a woman's empowerment and well-being and also to her children's well-being.

Around the world, women have less access to land than men because of legal barriers (for example, discriminatory inheritance laws). They also have less access to the tools and supplies needed to farm effectively. The U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) estimates that if all female smallholder farmers had equal access to productive resources, they could produce 20 percent to 30 percent more food, and between 100 million and 150 million fewer people would be hungry.

Education is also critical for reducing hunger. Girls who have access to education are more likely to be married later and begin having children later. The children of women who have been to school through fifth grade or eighth grade are healthier than children whose mothers are uneducated, even when the families are equally poor.

U.S. programs such as the McGovern-Dole Feeding Program provide food to girls in school to help feed their families. This changes the family's opportunity cost—the lost income from sending a girl to school rather than keeping her home to earn money or to focus on household chores and child care so her mother can work longer hours. Parents are also often worried about sending girls to distant secondary schools, since long walks to and from school can make them vulnerable to sexual harassment and violence. Such violations of girls' rights happen all too often at school as well.

Closing the wage gap between men and women would also significantly reduce hunger in the United States. In fact, research by the Institute for Women's Policy Research found that reducing the gender wage gap could cut the national poverty rate by more than half. On average for all occupations, women are paid 22 percent less than their male counterparts. Women of color are paid even less compared with white men than white women are. Black women working full time are paid 61 cents for every dollar paid to white men with the same job. The figures for indigenous women and Latinas are 58 cents and 53 cents, respectively. Having children worsens the gender pay gap: on average, mothers are paid less than women without children, while fathers are paid *more* than men without children.

Women, particularly women of color, are disproportionately concentrated in low-wage jobs. For example, nearly half of all home healthcare workers are women of color. Seventy percent of restaurant servers are women. These workers can legally be paid a “tipped wage”—a federally established subminimum wage that has been stalled at \$2.13 an hour since 1991.

Finally, as noted previously, women are more likely to invest their resources in their families. This is also true of women who hold public office. In the United States, 80 percent of public offices on the federal and state levels are held by men, even though women are 51 percent of the population. More women in office could make ending hunger and food insecurity a much higher priority for federal and state government, with more attention and resources devoted to policies that help accomplish that.

- What connections can you make between violence and disempowerment? In your experience, how are women

raised to respond to violence? Is it considered appropriate to protest firmly and, if necessary, to defend oneself?

- What limitations do women face when they are living in the midst of violent conflicts and in violent households?
- Read the Advocacy Impact Story, “Rebecca Dali and the Center for Caring, Empowering, and Peace.”
- How are caregivers compensated (financially or non-financially) in your community? What happens to our families and our society when we fail to compensate and value caregivers?
- Read the Advocacy Impact Story, “Dawn Pierce: Running to End Hunger,” and the section “Engendering the Political Will to End Hunger.” What opportunities and challenges face women in the U.S. Congress? What did you read that gives you hope?

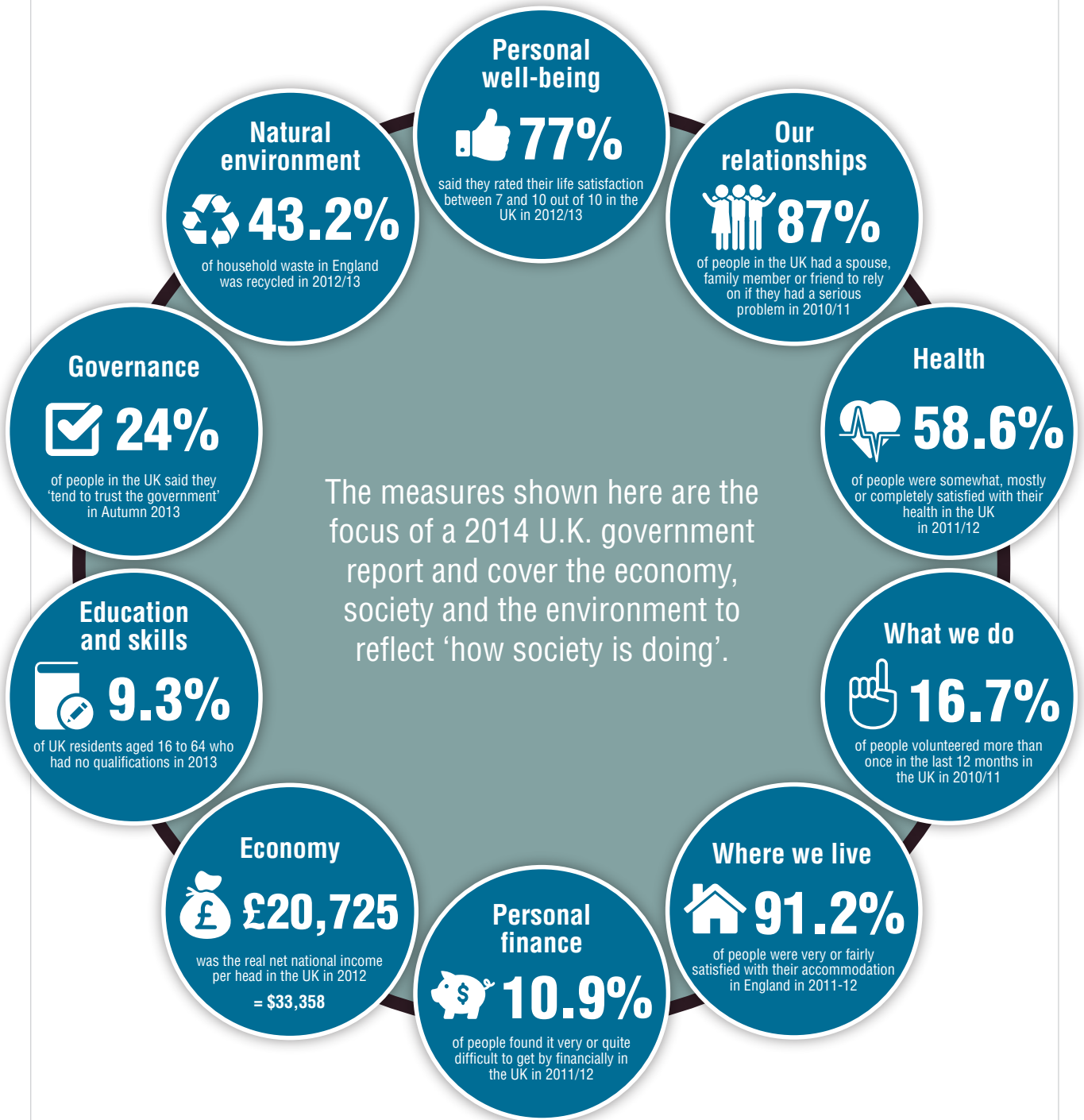
## Activities

- Have each member of your group make four columns on a piece of paper. Invite everyone to identify the primary people to whom they offer care (child, neighbor, church member, etc.), listing their names in the first column. In the second column, everyone should list the resources (financial and non-financial) that they use to care for these individuals. The third column should list the ways that the care benefits the caregiver, the recipient, and others. In the final column, people in the group should list other options for care. Invite the group to reflect on the results and share these reflections with each other.

Separate into two groups, men and women. Ask each group to review figure 1 (see page 5), which highlights 10 areas of well-being that the U.K. government surveyed in 2014. Have each group list the measures they would use to evaluate well-being related to health. Compare the men's answers with the women's answers. Now visit [hungerreport.org/nutrition](http://hungerreport.org/nutrition) and explore the interactive graphics that show the connections between women's empowerment and child nutrition in developing countries.

- Read the Faith Leaders' Statement in the 2015 Hunger Report at <http://hungerreport.org/2015/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/ReligiousLeadersStatement.pdf> and review the scriptures that are referenced. Reread the second-to-last paragraph. On a flip chart or white board, make your own list of times that Jesus “treated women with dignity and love.” Now make a list of times that you feel that the church has “encouraged social and cultural norms that prevent women from flourishing.” Looking at your two lists, discuss how your group or church can help remove what the statement calls “barriers that prevent women from participating fully in society.”

Figure 1    Life in the UK



Source: UK government (2014), Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress.

# CLIMATE CHANGE

## The Word

Ask for volunteers to read these passages aloud: Genesis 1:1-2:3

We read in the first book of the Bible, Genesis, that God created our world. God created our world, looked around, and found it good. Our earth was created for goodness. Our waters were created for goodness. Fish in the sea, animals on earth were created for goodness. So were birds and plants. All of it—goodness. Our world surrounds and provides us with abundant goodness. All of this was done, but the catch is that we, as a part of God’s creation, have a responsibility to care for “all creatures great and small” and every aspect of this created world in which we live.

We celebrate and embrace wholeheartedly the gift of God’s creation for all of humanity. When God created humankind, God gave us the responsibility to be good stewards of all the resources on earth. In that tradition, we have been given resources that are sufficient to provide basic necessities for all of God’s children.

We, as God’s people, have been charged with the task of caring for our earth. This means that we must ensure that the ways we use resources will leave enough for others. We need to use practices that make it possible to provide for all of God’s people around the world. We seek to live in right relationship with all of creation. We are to care for all aspects of God’s world—animals, water, land, and air. Everything that we do is continuously in relationship with other aspects of creation.

- When you read the creation story in the context of discussions about climate change, what do you notice? How does the context change your understanding or interpretation?
- What other passages of scripture come to mind when you think about stewardship of God’s creation?

## The Issue

This chapter of the Hunger Report highlights the need to slow, then stop, the global production of greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide so that climate change does not get worse. Each of us should act immediately to change our country’s approach to care for creation. This is particularly true for those of us living in wealthier nations and in democratic systems where we are free to speak out—because the reality is that the people who are suffering most from climate change now, and who will continue to bear the brunt of the impact, are not the people primarily responsible for creating the problem.

Within the most vulnerable countries, it is people who are already marginalized—women and girls, low-income communities, people from ethnic, racial, or religious minorities—who will be pushed even further from many of the basic necessities of life. For example, women and girls in many countries are expected to provide water for their households. In areas already significantly affected by climate change, this is an increasingly time-consuming and burdensome unpaid chore as they must walk longer and longer distances to get access to water. The many hours spent walking to a source of water and carrying heavy containers of it home could instead be used for education, income-earning projects, and rest.

Because those most impacted by global climate change are from poorer countries and communities, and, in the United States, are disproportionately people of color, women, and other marginalized groups, we must look to equity models to help negotiate the path to finding and embracing the needed changes.

The causes of food insecurity and hunger are closely related to the causes of climate change, so it is not surprising that their most severe effects are borne by many of the same people. Climate change both causes conflict because resources are becoming scarce and exacerbates the effects of conflicts that may have other significant causes. Being trapped by armed conflict taking place between your home and the nearest city is far worse if you also cannot grow food because of prolonged drought. Civil war and strife are creating near-famine conditions in countries such as Yemen and South Sudan. The civil war in Syria rapidly transformed a middle-income country with low rates of malnutrition into what we see on our television screens.

We must find new ways to mitigate climate change and also embrace calls for adaptation in our policies to address climate change. Climate change is affecting our land, our water, and our air. We must press for policy change to prevent further damage, and we must help people who are already suffering adapt to the changes that are no longer reversible.

- How has climate change affected your community? Explore the New York Times tool *How Much Hotter is Your Hometown Than When You Were Born?* at <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/08/30/climate/how-much-hotter-is-your-hometown.html>. What did you learn? What surprised you?



- What commitments has your church or denomination made to protect the planet? How can you make a greater impact? Read the Advocacy Impact Story, “Young Evangelicals for Climate Action: ‘Love God, Love Our Neighbors. Act on Climate Change.’” How does it inspire you?
- How has climate change impacted the economy in your state? Which industries have been affected most? Globally, what options are open to people in low-income, geographically vulnerable areas, such as Pacific island

nations near sea level or communities on the outskirts of the Sahara Desert?

## Application

- Watch and discuss the video *Catholic Social Teaching 101- Care for God’s Creation* at <https://youtu.be/wSnXuCxiHxE>. What resonates with you? How do you approach climate change differently? What documents has your church or denomination published about climate change?

# LIVELIHOODS

## The Word

Ask for volunteers to read Matthew 20:1-16 aloud.

From the beginning, work has been part of God’s plan for humanity. Work is not intended to be a punishment. On the contrary, work gives humankind an opportunity to be in fellowship with God and share responsibility for creation through good stewardship. Work gives men and women a sense of purpose, self-worth, and communion with God. In Matthew 20:1-16, heaven is described through the parable of the workers in the vineyard.

In the text, the owner of the vineyard illustrates some characteristics of the relationship between God and people, but also of certain aspects of how we as humans should treat each other. The story shows the importance of respect for the dignity of work and of ensuring that the basic needs of workers are met. Imagine these landowners going to the marketplace and seeing many day laborers waiting for an opportunity to work and therefore keep themselves and their families from going hungry. Many of us have ourselves seen or participated in such situations.

In the passage from Matthew, we know there were plenty of hands available for work, since every time the landowner went to the marketplace, he found laborers willing to take up the tasks. However, he did not take advantage of this to pit the laborers against each other, or to offer them a salary that was not fair and right, or to ask them to work extra hours, or to not pay them the same day as had been agreed. The landowner and each laborer entered into a verbal contract for fair wages. This is part of what dignified work is about—providing an opportunity for work where laborers are valued, treated with respect, and paid a fair wage, as agreed and in a timely manner. Work can also help build a person’s self-respect and sense of accomplishment.

Workers are providing for a family, contributing to something larger than themselves. They are also contributing to a community.

- What role does your church have in affirming the value and dignity of work at home and around the world?

Does the story of the landowner help us consider how we view job creation and fair labor practices?

- What does it mean to call on those with wealth to open their hand to the neighbor in need, as suggested in Scripture? Beyond donating money, how might we build a system that treats workers and all people fairly?
- How would you respond to the statement that hunger and poverty are the church’s work and not a government responsibility?
- How could fair and equitable treatment of employees lead to a more productive workplace?

## The Issue

Economic growth is essential to achieving the goal of ending hunger in the United States and around the world by 2030. In low- and middle-income countries, many of the people who are hungry and poor work on small, low-productivity farms. If these economies are going to offer better jobs with more opportunity, the nature of work must change and several related problems must be addressed. These include rapid demographic growth in the labor force, the impacts of climate change, limited access to economic inputs, inequitable land laws and policies, and weak value chains. Increasingly, the U.S. government is adopting “whole-of-government” approaches to help countries find and implement solutions to these problems. A whole-of-government approach brings together all relevant U.S. government agencies and programs; each contributes its expertise to help solve the problem. This leads to a more comprehensive and holistic solution.

At the same time, the U.S. economy has many shortcomings of its own. While corporate profits and executive salaries have grown substantially, the wages of average workers have been stagnant for decades. Millions of people work full-time but are not paid enough to cover their basic needs. The minimum wage is a floor that has been sinking beneath low-wage workers for years. Congress has not raised the minimum wage since 2009. Because the minimum wage is not adjusted for inflation, minimum-wage workers have lost buying

power—in effect, suffered a pay cut—every year for the past decade. While wage stagnation and income inequality affected mainly the lowest-paid workers at first, it affected wider swaths of the workforce as time went on. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it affects many workers with four-year college degrees.

Read the Advocacy Impact story “Just Economics: The People’s Voice for Transportation Equality in Asheville, North Carolina.” What are some of the systemic issues in your community or state that disproportionately impact low-wage workers’ ability to earn a living? What can you and your group do in solidarity to make an impact?

Where might there be opportunities for you to work together with church and community leaders to help end hunger and poverty outside the United States? If you are already engaged in such work, how can you deepen your involvement?

## Application

- In the United States, the dollar amount of what could fairly be described as a living or livable wage varies

widely. Look up the living wage for your community at <http://livingwage.mit.edu/>. Does this wage seem accurate based on your knowledge and experience? If you are paid less than a living wage, what are your options to try to ensure that your basic needs are met? What might some of the tradeoffs be? How can we, as individuals and as a community, support local employers that do pay all workers a living wage?

- For further study, you could look at the online resource The Lowdown: Connecting Newsroom to Classroom, produced by KQED radio. The resource includes a lesson plan for classroom use on the minimum wage that your group could use with minor adaptations. This would require a bit of advance planning but could be a great way to tie together what you have learned about jobs and wages. Find the resource at <https://ww2.kqed.org/lowdown/wp-content/uploads/sites/26/2017/01/Minimum-Wage-lesson-plan.pdf>.

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# NUTRITION

## The Word

Ask for volunteers to read these passages aloud: Mark 5:21-24a; 35-43; and Luke 8:40-42a; 49-56

In Scripture, many people are freed from illnesses—physical, psychological, and spiritual. However, how this healing takes place varies from story to story. Jesus may offer a caring touch or a bold command. He may apply mud to be washed off or just say simple words that affirm the person’s strong faith. Whatever the means, the results are often miraculous, both to the person cured and to bystanders, family members, and religious officials.

The passages selected for this session are about how Jesus healed Jairus’s daughter. The separate accounts by Mark and Luke have elements common to other biblical healing stories. Jesus receives an urgent plea from a parent and responds reassuringly. Events intervene that divert Jesus from the task, heightening the suspense. When Jesus arrives, he finds a community lamenting the apparent death of the sick person, and skeptical that his presence can make a difference. Their despair disappears as Jesus miraculously revives the person.

These particular stories of Jairus’s daughter offer another key insight. As the 12-year-old gets up and walks, Jesus directs those around her to feed her. The moment of healing is accomplished—but to restore this child fully, and to sustain her, the community must provide life-giving food. Jesus sees that this child must be nourished back to health.

In Genesis, God’s creative impulse provides enough food for all humanity to enjoy life’s fullness. However, nowadays,

in our distracted, fearful lives, we need reminders of our responsibility to distribute, share, and consume food. Jesus became flesh and lived among us as the Bread of Life, a living sign of the Reign of God. Food is at the core of that kingdom’s common life, as it was at creation. This is good news for everyone, including those who feel left out. The Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3) say: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” In that promised kingdom, hunger is no more. May it be so on earth as well.

- Why do you think Jesus emphasized the need to feed Jairus’s daughter? What was at stake?
- The Hebrew word shalom embraces “peace” as a deep, wide, and abiding wholeness, health, and welfare, not just the absence of conflict. In what ways does this story remind us of the broad, community-based nature of shalom?
- Jesus taught his disciples to ask for their “daily bread,” but in the feeding of the 5,000 (Mark 6:30:44) he told them, “You give them something to eat.” What do you make of this command from Jesus?

## The Issue

*“You cannot have equality of opportunity if children are not appropriately nourished.”*

—Jim Yong Kim, World Bank President, 2017.

The costs of malnutrition are staggering. From lost labor productivity to preventable illnesses and intergenerational poverty, everyone in society pays a share. But no one pays a higher cost than malnourished mothers and their children.



Malnutrition is associated with nearly half of all child deaths, and malnutrition in the form of anemia doubles the risk of maternal death during pregnancy and childbirth.

Stunted growth is a visible sign that a person has survived chronic malnutrition in early childhood. The child is far too short for his or her age. However, the true cost of stunting is reflected in the invisible damage of impaired brain development and weaker immune systems. The 1,000 days between pregnancy and a child's second birthday are the most critical time to improve a child's life chances—in health, education, and income-earning potential as an adult.

Feed the Future is a U.S. government global hunger and food security initiative. It emphasizes increasing agricultural productivity and improving nutrition outcomes in vulnerable countries. It focuses on smallholder farmers, primarily women smallholders, who produce most of the food that is consumed by their communities. Targeting assistance to women producers is the optimal strategy to address hunger and nutrition at the same time. Enabling women to earn higher incomes has been shown to improve children's nutrition, health, and education. Feed the Future has now been operating for almost a decade. According to its latest progress report, stunting has decreased by 32 percent in the communities where the program operates.

When healthy foods are missing from children's diets, one may assume these foods are not available. Sometimes there are other factors involved, though; for example, mothers may not have accurate information about what, how much, or how often to feed their children. A woman's level of education is a key determinant of not only her health, but also her children's.

Nutrition programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, called the Food Stamp Program until 2008) contribute to lifting tens of millions of people out of poverty every year, and they help lessen the severity of poverty for tens of millions more. The average benefit is about \$1.40 per person per meal—not enough to buy healthy food for the entire month. When SNAP benefits run out, typically in the third week of the month even with careful planning, people often turn to other sources of food assistance. Alongside the federal nutrition programs, a vast infrastructure of emergency food providers, in communities around the country, operate with both public and private resources. Feeding America, the umbrella organization for thousands of food banks, estimates that food banks provide 4.3 billion meals every year.

People living in poverty are also at higher risk of obesity. At first, the idea that hungry people are at greater risk of gaining too much weight may not make sense. It makes more

sense when we consider what it is like to be food insecure in the United States. Calories are relatively affordable—it is nutrients that are expensive. To stretch their grocery money to cover more of the month, families must choose cheaper, less nutritious, more filling foods that typically are higher in fat, sugar, and sodium. In some families, adults, particularly mothers, eat little toward the end of the month as the family runs short of food, and this type of episodic hunger is also a risk factor for weight gain. Other causes of weight gain include stress and depression, which are understandably more common among people worried that they won't be able to keep their children from going hungry.

Often, we assume that it's mainly the medical care we receive that determines how healthy we are. But it turns out that what are called “social determinants” of health—aspects of our socioeconomic environments such as food security, housing, or annual income—have a much greater impact on health than medical care. Chronic diseases are the main drivers of our country's skyrocketing healthcare costs, and many of them are related to diet. Healthy food and other elements of a prevention are much better for people, and much more cost-effective, than a series of hospital stays in efforts to control chronic conditions.

Every year, the federal nutrition programs save the country hundreds of billions of dollars in additional healthcare costs, as Bread for the World Institute documented in its 2016 Hunger Report, *The Nourishing Effect*. But studies show that up to one-third of chronically ill patients in the United States cannot afford to buy food, medications, or both. Ending food insecurity altogether, as our country has committed to doing, would save even more money—money that could instead be used for anything from medical research to strengthening schools and transportation.

- Read the Advocacy Impact Story on Perú. In what ways does advocacy spur progress on child malnutrition?
- The combination of education and access are critical to a family's ability to eat nutritious food. Often the burden is on mothers to put enough of the right foods on the table. How could that burden be shared? How have we in the United States provided nutrition education and improved families' access to nutritious food?
- What is the role of public institutions in assuring access to nutritious, affordable food? Why?
- Discuss how a relationship between public and private resources could work toward ending hunger. Do you know of local public/private partnerships that have been successful?

## Application/Activities

- In small groups, use the questions below to discuss how various programs (whether government-funded or charitable) are working to reduce hunger:
  - What is being done to connect hunger and health?
  - Are any of these programs providing nutrition education?
  - Are they providing access to nutritious food?
  - Is there a fruit and vegetable prescription program in your area?
- Ask for a group of volunteers to engage in a special project:
  - Map the following in your community:
    - Hospitals and clinics that offer food insecurity screenings
    - Pantries and/or food banks
  - Advocate for those hospitals that do not yet conduct food insecurity screenings to begin doing so.
  - Prepare a list of pantries and food banks and make it available so that hospital staff can link patients with available fruit and vegetables.
- Review the online video for the 2016 Hunger Report at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VG2RWfUYB8A>. This tells the story of how Wholesome Wave's fruit and vegetable prescription program (FNRx) is improving the health and food security of Rosalia's family. What is most striking to you about the story? Is the program effective and sustainable? What might enable a similar program to work in your area?
- If there are active parish nurses in your area, invite one to speak to your church or group. Discuss whether a parish nurse would be a good supplement to your church's current health and hunger work.
- Invite speakers from a local food pantry or food bank and from a local hospital or healthcare provider's office to have a dialogue about the ways their missions intersect. Find out what is currently being done to connect hunger and health, and share your insights from studying the Hunger Report. Think together about possible new approaches to improve health and nutrition in your area.

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## FRAGILITY

### The Word

Ask for volunteers to read these passages aloud: *Genesis 42: 1-24, Exodus 5: 1-23, Ruth 5: 1-22, Psalm 72, Isaiah 58, Matthew 21: 12-17.*

The Bible is full of stories about vulnerable people who rely on God for blessing and protection. It's also full of stories about God's using unlikely individuals to make a difference in the world.

There's the story of Joseph's family who, suffering from hunger, must ask the brother they sold into slavery for food. There's the story of the Hebrews enslaved in Egypt, suffering abuse and horrible working conditions under the Egyptians. They flee Egypt with the Egyptian army at their backs. Later in the story, they wander in the wilderness for 40 years, awaiting the day when they enter the land of Canaan and find themselves at home.

And, of course, there's the story of Naomi and Ruth. Famine forces Naomi to leave her home along with her husband and two sons. They take refuge in Moab, where her sons marry Moabite women. After losing her husband and sons, however, Naomi is vulnerable in this strange land with no family. She decides to return home, but she is vulnerable there too, even with her daughter-in-law Ruth's insistence on staying by her side.

These stories illustrate the vulnerability of human beings, but they also remind the Israelites time and again that they

should care for those who are vulnerable—the widow, the orphan, and the sojourner. Sacrifices to God in the temple were not only to support the livelihood of the priests—they were also to support those who were vulnerable. Another way of supporting hungry people was the practice of gleaning, which, as noted in the story of Ruth and Naomi, required farmers to leave leftover grains in the field after the harvest so that those in need could collect or “glean” it.

Right worship, led by the priests, includes care for vulnerable people. In Isaiah 58, the prophet rails against those who offer hollow sacrifices of animals and grain while exploiting the laborers and vulnerable people in their midst. When the Israelites want to be more like the nations around them, e.g., having a king to rule them, God appoints kings and calls prophets to keep the kings accountable to their mandate to care for the vulnerable among them. Psalm 72 outlines the duties of the king, saying,

“For he delivers the needy when they call,  
the poor and those who have no helper.  
He has pity on the weak and the needy,  
and saves the lives of the needy.

From oppression and violence he redeems their life;  
and precious is their blood in his sight.”

Jesus is highly critical of the Pharisees and the priestly class for their hypocrisy. They pray publicly and give extravagant sacrifices while exploiting poor and vulnerable people in the temple. In fact, Jesus turns over the tables at the temple in

anger, because these elites are charging exorbitant fees for changing money into the temple currency. They are also selling the animals and grains given as sacrifices at high prices to make a profit.

- Who are the vulnerable people in these stories? What has happened to put them in danger?
- Who was in a position to change their situation?
- What might they do for themselves? How?
- What role does hope play in these stories?

## The Issue

*Fragile: Handle with Care.* We see these words on packages with fragile contents—objects that are easily breakable. We know what fragile objects are, but how can a state be fragile? It really comes down to the same idea: something that is easily stretched past its limits, so it's not as durable as it could be or needs to be. In the case of nations, what is easily over-stretched is the government and its institutions.

A fragile government can't always fulfill its basic responsibilities, such as providing basic necessities in an emergency or protecting its population from danger. Causes of fragility include armed conflict, forced displacement of people from their homes, and poor governance.

In any widespread conflict such as war, more people die from hunger and disease than from violence. When conflict forces vulnerable people who rely on agriculture to make a living to flee their homes, they have no access to land to grow food. Children who live in developing countries affected by conflict are twice as likely to be hungry as children in other developing countries, and three times as likely to be out of school. Extremely poor nations that are at peace, on the other hand, have made impressive progress against hunger.

While the United States is clearly not a fragile country, there are places where the government has failed to protect people and ensure that they are equipped to support themselves and their families. The most notable are communities of “concentrated poverty”—where 20 percent, 40 percent, or even more of the population lives below the poverty line. Everyone who

lives in these areas faces a range of problems, whether or not they themselves have incomes below the poverty line. Alarmingly, an increasing percentage of poor people in the United States live in areas of concentrated poverty. Residents are far more likely to be people of color than are the residents of communities with lower poverty rates.

High poverty rates in a neighborhood lead to fewer job opportunities, fewer full-service grocery stores, more exposure to environmental toxins in substandard housing, and less access to health care. Employment is at the center of the problems in areas of concentrated poverty. Jobs that pay far less than a living wage, combined with a critical shortage of affordable housing, make it very difficult to make ends meet.

- How does fragility lead to hunger?
- What are some countries that could be considered fragile states?
- Has your community hosted refugees? How has this impacted the local community and economy?
- What are the short-term and long-term barriers that people living in high-poverty parts of the United States typically confront?
- What are some of the challenges facing community leaders, elected officials, and others charged with improving the lives of people in areas of concentrated poverty? What might be some solutions to the main problems?

## Activities

- Print out a copy of the graphic for the Sustainable Development Goals. Pick a few of the 17 goals to discuss. Suggestions include Zero Hunger (Goal 2), No Poverty (Goal 1), Gender Equality (Goal 5), Reduced Inequalities (Goal 10), and Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions (Goal 16). Discuss the challenges that the international development community will face in efforts to leave no one behind. How might your church engage? After today's session, reflect on the ideas presented and the discussion. Bring one new idea for church engagement to the next study session.



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