

Poverty Is Not God's Original Design

- **Genesis 1:28 NASB** – “*God blessed them; and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule...’*”
- Poverty is a distortion of God's command. God's design was for His people (you and I) to steward creation, cultivate, and prosper.
- **Deuteronomy 28:11-12 NASB** – “*The Lord will make you abound in prosperity... The Lord will open for you His good storehouse...*”
- Covenant obedience was tied to provision. Poverty is often connected in Scripture to oppression, injustice, or mismanagement, not God's desire.

Deuteronomy 28:11-12 NASB

1“Now it shall be, if you diligently obey the LORD your God, being careful to do all His commandments which I command you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth.

2“All these blessings will come upon you and overtake you if you obey the LORD your God:

3“Blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed shall you be in the country.

4“Blessed shall be the offspring of your body and the produce of your ground and the offspring of your beasts, the increase of your herd and the young of your flock.

5“Blessed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl.

6“Blessed shall you be when you come in, and blessed shall you be when you go out.

7“The LORD shall cause your enemies who rise up against you to be defeated before you; they will come out against you one way and will flee before you seven ways.

8“The LORD will command the blessing upon you in your barns and in all that you put your hand to, and He will bless you in the land which the LORD your God gives you.

9“The LORD will establish you as a holy people to Himself, as He swore to you, if you keep the commandments of the LORD your God and walk in His ways.

10“So all the peoples of the earth will see that you are called by the name of the LORD, and they will be afraid of you.

11“The LORD will make you abound in prosperity, in the offspring of your body and in the offspring of your beast and in the produce of your ground, in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers to give you.

12“The LORD will open for you His good storehouse, the heavens, to give rain to your land in its season and to bless all the work of your hand; and you shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow.

13“The LORD will make you the head and not the tail, and you only will be above, and you will not be underneath, if you listen to the commandments of the LORD your God, which I charge you today, to observe them carefully,

14and do not turn aside from any of the words which I command you today, to the right or to the left, to go after other gods to serve them.

***Systems of Oppression**

Isaiah 10:1-2 NASB “ –Woe to those who enact unjust statutes and to those who constantly record harmful decisions, so as to deprive the needy of justice and rob the poor of My people of their rights...”

- **Proverbs 14:31 NASB** – *“One who oppresses the poor taunts his Maker, but one who is gracious to the needy honors Him.”*
- God judges those who exploit. As a community, we must recognize and resist unjust systems while building alternatives.

Theological Foundation: God Opposes Oppression, Commands Justice

- **Exodus 3:7-8 NASB** – *“I have certainly seen the oppression of My people... I am aware of their sufferings. So I have come down to rescue them...”*
- God is not neutral about oppression—He acts to liberate His people.
- **Isaiah 61:1-2 NASB** – *“The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord anointed me to bring good news to the humble; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim release to captives and freedom to prisoners...”*

- **Luke 4:18-19**

- **NASB** – *“The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He anointed Me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim release to captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed, to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord.”*
- **NLT** – *“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the oppressed will be set free, and that the time of the Lord’s favor has come.”*

*******Poverty Linked to Oppression, Not God’s Will*******

- **Amos 8:4-6 NASB** – *“Hear this, you who trample the needy, to put an end to the humble of the land... so as to buy the helpless for money and the needy for a pair of sandals...”*

Leviticus 25 The Message Bible

8–12 “Count off seven Sabbaths of years—seven times seven years: Seven Sabbaths of years adds up to forty-nine years. Then sound loud blasts on the ram’s horn on the tenth day of the seventh month, the Day of Atonement. Sound the ram’s horn all over the land. Sanctify the fiftieth year; make it a holy year. Proclaim freedom all over the land to everyone who lives in it—a Jubilee for you: Each person will go back to his family’s property and reunite with his extended family. The fiftieth year is your Jubilee year: Don’t sow; don’t reap what volunteers itself in the fields; don’t harvest the untended vines because it’s the Jubilee and a holy year for you. You’re permitted to eat from whatever volunteers itself in the fields.

13 “In this year of Jubilee everyone returns home to his family property.

14–17 “If you sell or buy property from one of your countrymen, don’t cheat him. Calculate the purchase price on the basis of the number of years since the Jubilee. He is obliged to set the sale price on the basis of the number of harvests remaining until the next Jubilee. The more years left, the more money; you can raise the price. But the

fewer years left, the less money; decrease the price. What you are buying and selling in fact is the number of crops you're going to harvest. Don't cheat each other. Fear your God. I am GOD, your God.

18–22 “Keep my decrees and observe my laws and you will live secure in the land. The land will yield its fruit; you will have all you can eat and will live safe and secure. Do I hear you ask, ‘What are we going to eat in the seventh year if we don’t plant or harvest?’ I assure you, I will send such a blessing in the sixth year that the land will yield enough for three years. While you plant in the eighth year, you will eat from the old crop and continue until the harvest of the ninth year comes in.

23–24 “The land cannot be sold permanently because the land is mine and you are foreigners—you’re my tenants. You must provide for the right of redemption for any of the land that you own.

25–28 “If one of your brothers becomes poor and has to sell any of his land, his nearest relative is to come and buy back what his brother sold. If a man has no one to redeem it but he later prospers and earns enough for its redemption, he is to calculate the value since he sold it and refund the balance to the man to whom he sold it; he can then go back to his own land. If he doesn’t get together enough money to repay him, what he sold remains in the possession of the buyer until the year of Jubilee. In the Jubilee it will be returned and he can go back and live on his land.

29–31 “If a man sells a house in a walled city, he retains the right to buy it back for a full year after the sale. At any time during that year he can redeem it. But if it is not redeemed before the full year has passed, it becomes the permanent possession of the buyer and his descendants. It is not returned in the Jubilee. However, houses in unwalled villages are treated the same as fields. They can be redeemed and have to be returned at the Jubilee.

32–34 “As to the Levitical cities, houses in the cities owned by the Levites are always subject to redemption. Levitical property is always redeemable if it is sold in a town that they hold and reverts to them in the Jubilee, because the houses in the towns of the Levites are their property among the People of Israel. The pastures belonging to their cities may not be sold; they are their permanent possession.

35–38 “If one of your brothers becomes indigent and cannot support himself, help him, the same as you would a foreigner or a guest so that he can continue to live in your neighborhood. Don’t gouge him with interest charges; out of reverence for your God help your brother to continue to live with you in the neighborhood. Don’t take advantage of his plight by running up big interest charges on his loans, and don’t give him food for profit. I am your GOD who brought you out of Egypt to give you the land of Canaan and to be your God.

39–43 “If one of your brothers becomes indigent and has to sell himself to you, don’t make him work as a slave. Treat him as a hired hand or a guest among you. He will work for you until the Jubilee, after which he and his children are set free to go back to his clan and his ancestral land. Because the People of Israel are my servants whom I brought out of Egypt, they must never be sold as slaves. Don’t tyrannize them; fear your God.

44–46 “The male and female slaves which you have are to come from the surrounding nations; you are permitted to buy slaves from them. You may also buy the children of foreign workers who are living among you temporarily and from their clans which are living among you and have been born in your land. They become your property. You may will them to your children as property and make them slaves for life. But you must not tyrannize your brother Israelites.

47–53 “If a foreigner or temporary resident among you becomes rich and one of your brothers becomes poor and sells himself to the foreigner who lives among you or to a member of the foreigner’s clan, he still has the right of redemption after he has sold himself. One of his relatives may buy him back. An uncle or cousin or any close relative of his extended family may redeem him. Or, if he gets the money together, he can redeem himself. What happens then is that he and his owner count out the time from the year he sold himself to the year of Jubilee; the buy-back price is set according to the wages of a hired hand for that number of years. If many years remain before the Jubilee, he must pay back a larger share of his purchase price, but if only a few years remain until the Jubilee, he is to calculate his redemption price accordingly. He is to be treated as a man hired from year to year. You must make sure that his owner does not tyrannize him.

54–55 “If he is not redeemed in any of these ways, he goes free in the year of Jubilee, he and his children, because the People of Israel are my servants, my servants whom I brought out of Egypt. I am GOD, your God.

Christ is our Jubilee

- **Luke 4:18-19 NASB** – “*The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me... to bring good news to the poor... to set free those who are oppressed, to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord.*”
- Jesus declares a Jubilee: release from debt, restoration of land, freedom from bondage.

- In Christ, liberation includes financial, social, and spiritual renewal.

Slavery to Generational Poverty

- Like Israel, African Americans were stripped of land, labor, and wealth.
- **1619–1865:** Enslaved labor built America's wealth while African Americans were denied wages, family stability, and property.
- **1865:** Emancipation promised "40 acres and a mule" (land as biblical inheritance, cf. Numbers 26:52-56). But that promise was rescinded.
- **Jim Crow Era:** Sharecropping, convict leasing, redlining, and exclusion from New Deal benefits kept Black families in cycles of poverty.
- **Civil Rights to Today:** Despite legal equality, systemic barriers—discriminatory lending, underfunded schools, mass incarceration—mirror the unjust weights and measures condemned in Amos.
- By 2024, the median white household holds **6–10x more wealth** than the median Black household—a continuation of that legacy.

Hispanic Journey

Conquest, Dispossession, and Labor Exploitation

- **Habakkuk 2:12 NASB** – *"Woe to him who builds a city with bloodshed, and founds a town with violence!"*
 - The conquest of Mexico and the Southwest stripped Hispanic/Indigenous peoples of their land, culture, and wealth.

1848: Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo

Micah 2:2 NASB – *“They covet fields, so they seize them; and houses, so they take them away.”*

- Promised Mexican landowners the right to keep their property after the U.S.-Mexico War.
- In practice, courts and violence stripped much of this land away.

20th Century: Cheap Labor Without Rights

James 5:4 NLT – *“For listen! Hear the cries of the field workers...”*

- Bracero Program (1942–1964): brought millions of Mexican laborers to U.S. farms and railroads, often underpaid and exploited.
- Migrant farmworkers (from Mexico, Puerto Rico, Central America) faced unsafe housing, poverty wages, and no protections.
- The Bible names the injustice of farmworker exploitation directly.

Systemic Exclusion

Proverbs 22:22 NASB – *“Do not rob the poor because he is poor, nor crush the needy at the gate.”*

Segregated schools, “English only” laws, and discriminatory immigration policies paralleled Jim Crow restrictions.

****As of today****

Hispanics are the largest minority group in the U.S. (over 60 million).

Still face wage gaps, overrepresentation in low-paying labor, and limited generational wealth.

Yet, Hispanic churches and communities have built powerful **mutual aid, family networks, and faith traditions** that mirror Acts 2 economics.

IV. Kingdom Economics

- **Acts 2:44-45**
 - **NASB** – *“And all the believers were together and had all things in common; and they would sell their property and possessions and share them with all, to the extent that anyone had need.”*
 - **NLT** – *“And all the believers met together in one place and shared everything they had. They sold their property and possessions and shared the money with those in need.”*
- **2 Corinthians 8:13-14**
 - **NASB** – *“For this is not for the relief of others and for your hardship, but by way of equality—at this present time your abundance will serve as assistance for their need, so that their abundance also may serve as assistance for your need, so that there may be equality.”*
 - **NLT** – *“Of course, I don’t mean your giving should make life easy for others and hard for yourselves. I only mean that there should be some equality. Right now you have plenty and can help those who are in need. Later, they will have plenty and can share with you when you need it. In this way, things will be equal.”*
- **James 5:4**
 - **NASB** – *“Behold, the pay of the laborers who mowed your fields, and which has been withheld by you, cries out against you; and the outcry of those who did the harvesting has reached the ears of the Lord of armies.”*
 - **NLT** – *“For listen! Hear the cries of the field workers whom you have cheated of their pay. The cries of those who harvest your fields have reached the ears of the Lord of Heaven’s Armies.”*