



TRANSFORM  
OUR WORLD

## THE SCHOOL OF TRANSFORMATION



TRANSFORMATION IN YOUR SPHERE OF INFLUENCE  
*Week 9* **ELIMINATING SYSTEMIC POVERTY**





# SUMMARY WEEK 9

## IN THIS SESSION YOU WILL:

1. Learn the four dimensions of poverty and how the gospel really is “good news to the poor”.
2. See how the rich and the poor must come together to eliminate poverty.
3. See how the elimination of poverty puts “skin” on Jesus so that unbelievers believe in the resurrection as they did in the early church.
4. Discover 5 streams which must converge for nations to be healed.

The fifth paradigm states that Transformation must be tangible and that the primer social indicator that Transformation has occurred is the elimination of systemic poverty.





# PREPARATION

## SYSTEMIC POVERTY

*Paradigm 5: Nation transformation must be tangible, and the premier social indicator is the elimination of systemic poverty.*

Nowhere is the kingdom of darkness more entrenched in the world today than when it comes to the manifestations of systemic poverty. Systemic poverty is not a peripheral issue in the Bible. The elimination of poverty is central to the gospel message of redemption, and for that reason it is both a by-product and the most tangible social evidence of true, biblically based transformation. In fact, Jesus began His ministry by an-

nouncing good news to the poor; the Early Church had no needy people in its ranks (as I will show here in great detail); and the book of Revelation ends with a climactic parade of healthy and wealthy nations bringing their honor and glory to God. The elimination of systemic poverty may sound like a radical statement, but it is fully biblical and, if embraced, will have tremendous repercussions for the Church as we know it today—and even greater and more glorious ones for the world around us.

Continue reading...go to the Appendix and read the complete article from *Transformation*, ch. 11.







## MENTORING

Watch Mentoring Session 9: “The Redemptive Role Of Wealth”

<http://www.transformourworld.org/en/mentoring/redemptive-wealth>

Watch Mentoring session 11: “The Way Forward”

<http://www.transformourworld.org/en/mentoring/way-forward>

Read Ch. 11 and 12 in *Transformation*

## Welcome to Mentoring



Welcome to Mentoring  
by Ed Silvano

# WEBCAST



## NOTES:

The subject is the elimination of systemic poverty. So let's put it in perspective.

We have been using the 5 pivotal paradigms. Paradigms that have to shift for us to see what was there all the time in the Scriptures.

The first paradigm is that you are called to disciple nations. Jesus told us go and make disciples of all the nations.

Then we covered paradigm 2 – the marketplace has been redeemed. Paradigm 3 - we are all ministers and labor is worship. Paradigm 4 that was last week – taking the Ekklesia where the gates of hades are.

And now we come to paradigm 5 which is...





This is God's short cut to discipling a nation.

I want you to picture a person you are witnessing to, you are telling about the Lord. And they say, I don't believe in God and even if I do I don't believe in your God. And that person will go nowhere.

And then that person develops an incurable disease. And now you offer prayer. And that person says I don't believe in prayer. You say don't worry, I do. Well I don't believe in Jesus. Give me a shot and you might.

And let's say for a moment that you pray for that person who is dying of cancer and who only has weeks to live, and God heals that person. What do you think will happen? What is the first question that person is going to ask?

Who did this? Tell me more about it. So listen to the Holy Spirit. The elimination of systemic poverty is the "what for" of the 5 paradigms and it has to do with curing the cancer that is killing our nation.

## NOTES:

The Church Age begins  
with a Commission to  
Disciple the Nations.

It ends with  
Nations being discipled

### Matt. 28:18-20

And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.

"Go therefore and  
***disciple all the nations,***  
baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

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Matt. 28 is the great commission. We feel overwhelmed by that. I'm sure the apostles felt the same way. But it didn't change Jesus' command, Go and do it.

Now fast-forward all the way to Rev. 21:24-26.

## NOTES:

### Rev. 21: 24-26

<sup>24</sup> And the nations shall walk by its light, and the kings of the earth shall bring their glory into it.

<sup>26</sup> and they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it

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So we know how it begins – with a command. Go and do it. When Jesus gave that command there was not a single nation that was Christian. Today we have a little bit of an edge there.

But it ends with nations being saved. The question is - What is the key? The key is ch. 22 following ch. 21 in Revelation.

### Rev. 22:1-2

And the leaves of the Tree of Life were [had been - used to be] for the healing of the nations....[since from now on] there shall no longer be any curse....”

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So how did the early church do with regards to systemic poverty?

When I was writing the book Transformation, every book I read about poverty focused primarily if not exclusively on material dimension of poverty. The problem with that is that you have two choices. You become a socialist and redistribute wealth, or you become a communist and you discard capitalism.

So I asked the Lord, “Show me from the Scriptures your perspective of poverty and the flipside which is wealth.” So the Lord took me to what we call the Lord’s Prayer.

## NOTES:

Luke 11:3

*“Our Father...give  
us each day our  
daily bread.”*

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Luke 11:3

*“Our Father...give  
us each day our  
daily bread.”*

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And I color coded that because each one of those colors reflects one of the four dimensions of poverty that on the flipside become the four dimensions of wealth.

## NOTES:



So you see material poverty is only one of four dimensions. Where do I get that?



1. Well people who don't know God is their Father are spiritually poor.
2. People who pray "my God give me today, my bread to eat it alone and I'll give away a few crumbs" rather than "our Father" We are all God's creation. We have a responsibility. We are part of a global community. They are relationally poor.
3. Then you have people who are motivationally poor because you give them money today, and then you have to give them money tomorrow and next month. You give them seeds and they eat the seeds instead of saving some and planting some and harvesting and baking their own bread.



4. And finally material poverty – people who lack bread. People who lack the essentials.

This is an interesting thing. In the spiritual and relational dimensions the poor people are richer than what we call rich people on those two counts. Why?

## NOTES:

### AREAS of WEALTH

- Spiritual **POOR**
- Relational
- Motivational
- Material

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Because the Bible teaches us that the poor are rich in faith. And sociologists tell us that poor people have more friends than rich people.

### AREAS of WEALTH

- Spiritual
- Relational
- RICH** • Motivational
- Material

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Right there you have the rich who are rich materially and motivationally they are poor relationally and spiritually and vice versa for the poor. Which means that...

*LEVELING THE FIELD*

***Both*** groups are  
***strong / weak*** in  
***complimentary***  
areas

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That means they must interface, they must team up to eliminate poverty.

*LEVELING THE FIELD*

***Both*** groups must  
***interface*** to  
***eliminate***  
poverty

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And now we see that everybody is part of the problem and everybody is part of the solution.

And when we understand that it's not about money, it's about relationships. It's about motivation. It's about showing people not only how to fish but how to own the pond. Now things begin to change.

And just to give you a taste of it look at this collage of video clips which come from our bookstore which I encourage you to visit on [transformourworld.org](http://transformourworld.org). Watch it!

VIDEO CLIPS: from Transformation Entrepreneurs video

Alex Noriega –

Michael Brown –

Pat-Nei Woo –



ED: Did you get it? There you have Alex talking about relational poverty, helping people go to school. You have Michael Brown selling down rather than up. Why? Because “my workers are my family.” You see how he’s addressing the spiritual, the relational, the motivational and the material. Then you have Pat Nie talking about three bottom lines.

These four dimensions of poverty are in Jesus’ first teaching that is recorded in Luke 4.

He says, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me. He has anointed me to give good news to the poor.”

## NOTES:

### JESUS' SUMMARY OF HIS MISSION

Lk. 4:18-19

**MATERIAL** – *Good news to the poor*

**MOTIVATIONAL** – *Freedom to the  
downtrodden*

**RELATIONAL** – *Freedom to the captives*

**SPIRITUAL** – *Sight to the blind*

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Take a moment to look at these four. It pays to change your paradigm. You begin to see the gospel as good news.

In one sentence the Lord was saying, I came...

**In one sentence:**

*To announce the favorable year  
of the Lord.*

What he was saying? In other words...

## NOTES:

In one sentence:

*To announce the favorable year of the Lord.*

In other words:

*To tell the people that He wants to do them a favor!*

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Oh let the Lord speak to you. Even though we will have to cooperate with God, we will have to partner with him, God says I own the candy store and I'm ready to give away candy.

Like we like to say in Argentina, if you're the one who owns the football, you call a game any time you want.

So God says I want to see poverty eliminated and that is what this session is all about. So let's go to the Scriptures now. In Acts 4:32-34 it says...

**Acts 4:32-34** And the congregation of those who believed were of **one heart** and **[one] soul**; and not one of them claimed that anything belonging to him was his own; but all things were **common property** to them. And with great power the apostles were giving witness to the resurrection of the **Lord Jesus**, and abundant grace was upon them all. For there was not a needy person among them, for all who were owners of land or houses would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales.

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And this is not talking just about the rich giving to the poor. Look at the screen.

The emphasis on "them" and "them all" means it's talking about the entire church.

There you have people of ...

## NOTES:

# 4 Dimensions of Poverty dealt with

Acts 4:32-34

- One heart* – Relational
- One soul* – Motivational
- Common property* – Material
- Lord Jesus* – Spiritual

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Let the Lord speak to you because you're going to hear testimonies today. You're going to see that this is already happening, but it's very important to anchor this in the Scriptures.

It says...

## Acts 4:32-34

And the congregation of those who believed were of **one heart** and **[one] soul**; and not one of them claimed that anything belonging to him was his own; but all things were **common property** to them. And with great power the apostles were giving witness to the resurrection of the **Lord Jesus**, and abundant grace was upon them all. For there was not a needy person among them, for all who were owners of land or houses would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales.

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At the end it says there was not a needy person among them but in the middle there, see it in gold letters.

v. 32 talks about material things. v. 34 material things, v. 33 talks about what we would call spiritual things.



## NOTES:

“And with **great power** the apostles were **giving witness to the resurrection** of the Lord Jesus, and **abundant grace** was upon them **all**.”

- Acts 4:33

In other words they were telling people that Jesus was alive. But it says they were doing it with great power which means that they convinced people.

And we know that they convinced a lot of people because abundant grace was made available to them. Why? Because lots of sinners were getting saved.

So take a moment now. Why would people believe that Jesus was alive if they haven't seen him resurrected? Why?

We'll look at the beginning of v. 34.

“And with **great power** the apostles were **giving witness to the resurrection** of the Lord Jesus, and **abundant grace** was upon them **all**.”

- Acts 4:33

**Why?**

***Because “...there was not a needy person among them.”***

- Acts 4:34

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What does that mean?

NOTES:

The **witness** of the resurrection of Christ was **credible** because of the **visible transformation** in the **social arena**

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The invisible became visible because somebody put skin on Jesus.

The Early Church left a **model** for the **elimination** of **systemic poverty**

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...even the very first day of the church's existence in Acts 2.

*It happened before*

Acts 2:45-47

45 And they *began* selling their property and possessions, and were sharing them with *all*, as *anyone* might have need.

46 And day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart,

47 praising God, and having favor with *all the people*. And the Lord was *adding to their number day by day* those who were being saved.

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...God was adding to their numbers because a new social order was established.

Let the Lord speak to you now. Do you realize that poverty is not only material but it's relational. And it's relational because we don't know God.

But when people are blind to the reality of God, to the glorious reality of the gospel of Jesus Christ, we need to open their eyes by drawing near them.

Now you're going to see now a video clip from Ciudad Juarez. Who do you think were the poorest people relationally?

Sicarios! Nobody wanted to be friends with a Sicario. They killed people right and left. But look what happened.

VIDEO CLIP: Ciudad Juarez

PONCHO: Juarez has begun adopting streets in prayer. And God has an even greater challenge for Poncho Murgia. He made a decision to adopt the Sicarios!

ED: Do you know what is happening now? Let me give you an update. Sicarios are becoming Christians and they are joining the Ekklesia started by Poncho Murgia and they are saying, "Somebody wants me!" And they are welcome and then they discover that God is the one who told these Christians to love the unlovable. And now they get a motivation.

Actually I fellowshiped with two of these ex-sicarios. They look rough on the outside but you look at them in the eyes and they are changed people. You hear them talk about Jesus and they love Jesus. So you see folks this is the Ekklesia in action when we take transformation to our sphere of influence.

Now if you want to take it to the other extreme come with me to Indonesia with the largest Muslim population. There a Christian family dedicating a city to God in a Muslim region and taking care of the felt needs of the people by providing water. Watch it.

VIDEO CLIP: from Sentul City...dedicating city to God,



seeing change in spiritual climate. They prayed for water, begin digging and water came out from the land.

ED: So pause a moment now – When Jesus said I have good news for the poor – He meant it!

The early church had no needy person. Folks it happened in the early days of the church. It's happening today and God wants to empower you, to inspire you to see that poverty, systemic poverty can be eliminated first in cities, then in provinces and eventually nations will come to the Lord.



CHUCK: Yes isn't that awesome! Poverty in its four dimensions eliminated. And we know that relational poverty happens when people keep what they have to themselves and don't take care of others around them. But it also happens when relationships are broken. There's a spiritual poverty and a relational poverty that happens. I love that story in the book Prayer Evangelism where a couple invited their son – when Ed and the team were there doing a three day prayer evangelism thrust...(tells testimony of transformation in the son who was stopped in the middle of his sin, came back, repented and joined his parents in ministry)



## NOTES:



BENJY: Troubled young people cause trouble. Is there hope that that can change? Absolutely! Take a look at this...and think about some troubled kids in your sphere of influence.

VIDEO CLIP: Lisa Sanchez shares impact her son had on a troubled teenager.



ED: And now we come to the moment of impartation. To see what we have never seen we need to do what we have never done. And the key here is the tree of life. Because the tree of life according to Revelation 22 is how those nations got healed.

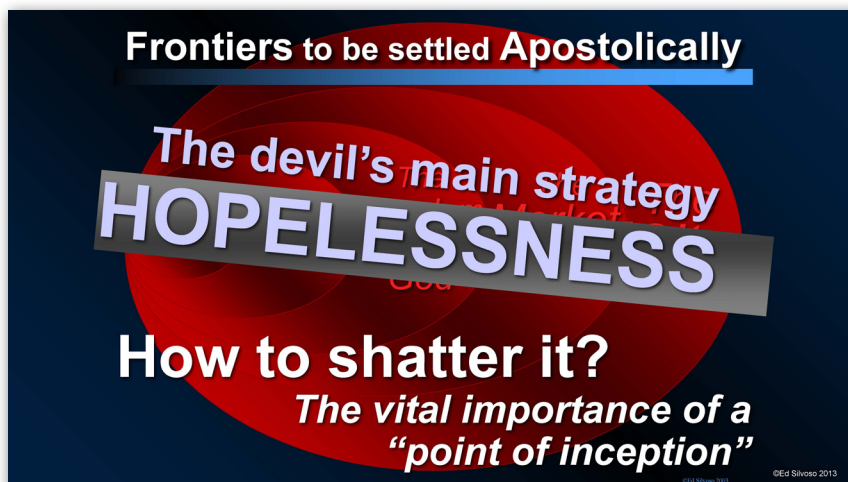
The tree of life is mentioned in only three books of the Bible.

# THE TREE OF LIFE and THE HEALING OF NATIONS Genesis - Revelations Proverbs

And the third book is Proverbs chapter 3 which is a chapter on the wisdom of God. Remember - lean not on your own understanding but trust in the Lord with all your heart. It says "he who finds God's wisdom finds a tree of life".

That's why the impartation has to do with you having your eyes opened so you will see whatever illnesses are in your sphere of influence and you will access a leaf from the tree of life that will be a solution to that systemic problem.

And you need to keep in mind that the devil rules through hopelessness.



He convinces people that this will never change and so often we Christians echo that.



We spiritualize it but basically we are preaching a gospel that is not good news. That's why we need to change paradigms.

So how do we shatter the hopelessness. Don't curse the darkness. What do you do? Turn on a light.

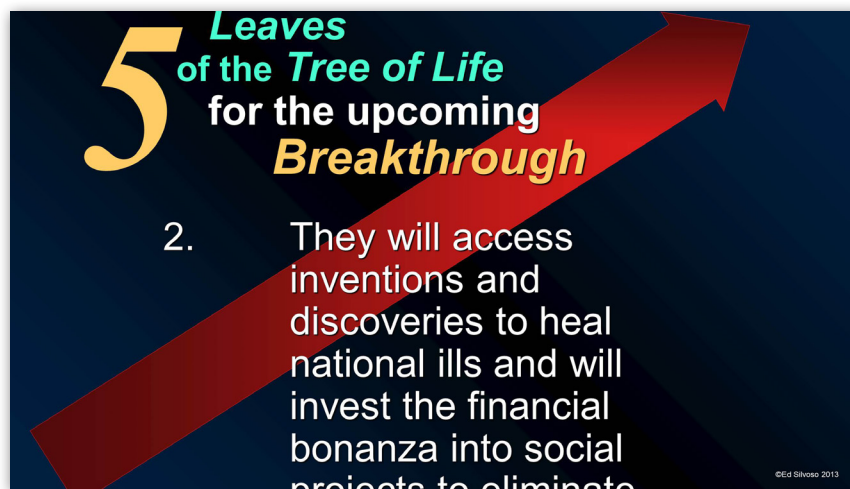
OK, how do we do that? Well we need to understand there are 5 streams that will converge to put into place the river of God that we see in Revelation 22.

## NOTES:



Watch the DVD Kingdom Entrepreneurs and you will see this already in action.

Number 2...

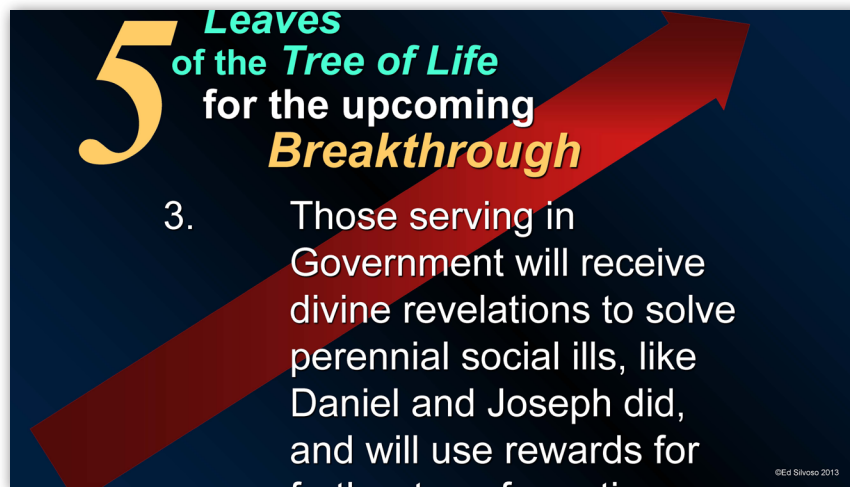


How much would the patent be worth for a vaccine against cancer? Or a cure for AIDS? Or for energy that doesn't pollute the planet?

I'll tell you the leaves of the tree of life are waiting for somebody to access them.

Why haven't we gotten there before? A number of reasons but one of them is that we want it for ourselves. But these things are given only to transformed nations.

Number 3...

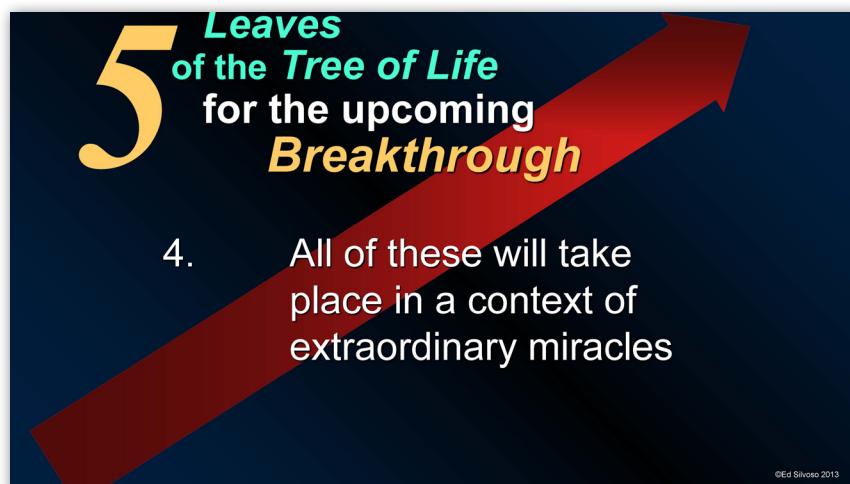


...rewards (which is usually power) for further transformation.

If you are in government, government will be on his shoulders. You are on Jesus' shoulders.

Say, "Lord show me how to fix this problem."

Number 4...

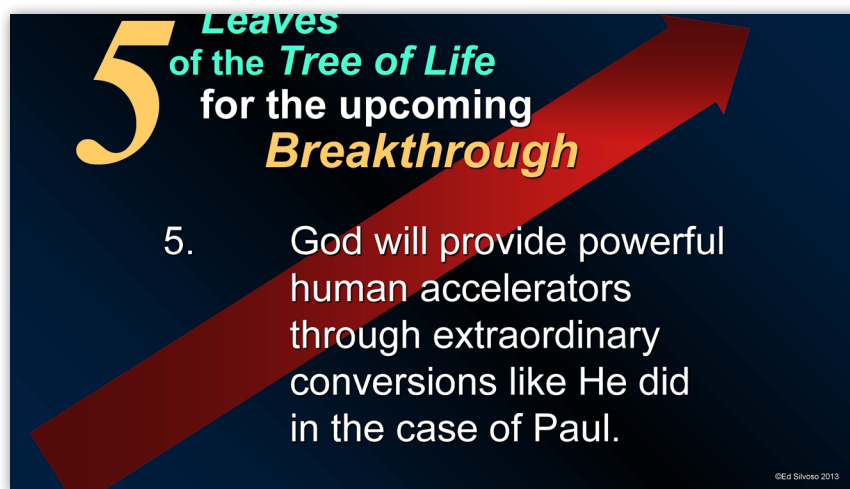


## NOTES:

That comes from chapter 20 in the book of Acts. Miracles that were performed because Paul was working in the marketplace so full of the Holy Spirit that his perspiration imparted something to his garments, and his garments touched someone and they were healed or delivered.

Whatever you do in the marketplace do it in such a fullness of the Holy Spirit – whether you are preparing a meal or driving a taxi or closing a deal virtue will come out of you!

And number 5...



Yes, don't curse people in government who are evil and mean spirited. The best revenge is to bless them. When you bless them you are piling up coals of fire over their heads. How long can they endure that?

Don't pour water of cursing, keep piling the fire of blessing upon their heads.

And then once you get these streams coming together we will see the river of God.

So in conclusion, you may say Ed, Chuck, Jill, Benjy I don't own a company. I am not a prime minister, I'm just an ordinary person.

## NOTES:

Well look at the screen.

## NOTES:

### The anointing for # 2

Joseph  
Daniel  
Esther

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In the major examples of transformation of nations and empires, God used a “number 2”.

Joseph, Daniel and Esther were number 2.

The way Esther treated her husband who was not a believer, the way she set the table and hosted a gala dinner, I'll tell you homemakers there is an anointing on that chopping board. There is an anointing on that frying pan. There is an anointing on that ironing board. It's the Esther anointing.

You may be the lowest ranking person like the little girl who was a servant to Naaman's wife. But she got a word from God, gave it to her mistress, she gave it to her husband, and I'll tell you that nation was never the same.

So in conclusion, Moses and Solomon. Both of them received an assignment to build a dwelling place for God.

DIVINE REVELATION vs.  
BEST SECULAR PRACTICES

MOSES  
vs.  
SOLOMON

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Moses was told to build the tent of gathering and the ark of the covenant. That's where God dwelled. Solomon was told to build a temple.

Both of them did it. But when they were done Moses was stronger than ever. Moses was mightier than ever before. But Solomon had lost his faith and had become an idolater.

Why? Because Moses relied on the Holy Spirit who filled Bezalel and his team with his creative power. And Moses did God's job using the power of the Holy Spirit.

On the other hand Solomon looked for the best practices, the best temple builders. They were all pagans. He settled on his neighbor Hiram, the king of Lebanon. And they built God's temple but they introduced pagan practices that eventually destroyed Solomon's faith.

Oh let the Lord speak to you now. Whatever you learned before is not enough. You need an impartation. You need a Pentecost.

Now that you have experienced personal transformation, family transformation, and transformation in your sphere of influence, and now you are poised to lead others, we pray now with Chuck, with Jill, with Benjy. We stretch our hands out to you, and in the name of the Lord Jesus be filled with the Holy Spirit. Be filled with the anointing for extraordinary miracles.

Let your eyes be opened to see the pathway to the tree of life. And let a passion for the lost, and a passion for those who don't know God take hold of you right now. And may you cry with everything in your soul, "Woe to me if I do not proclaim this good news that nations can be transformed."

Say Amen. Say I receive it. Go for it!



## QUESTIONS FOR YOUR GROUP

1. Explain how the fifth pivotal paradigm is “God’s short cut” to discipling a nation.
2. What are the four dimensions of poverty seen in the Lord’s Prayer in Luke 11:3? Why is it important to address more than just material poverty?
3. In what areas are the “poor” rich and the “rich” poor? Why is it important that the rich and poor team up to eliminate poverty?

4. How does Acts 33-34 show poverty eliminated in each of the four dimensions? Why would people believing that Jesus was alive if they didn't see him resurrected?

5. What are the five streams and how will they converge to put into place the river of God that we see in Rev. 22? What is the main reason we don't see this yet? How does the biblical concept of "the anointing for #2" encourage you to go for nations?



## **REFLECTION AND ACTION**

1. Take a moment to look at whatever illnesses are in your sphere of influence and write them down. Ask God to give you a leaf from the tree of life that will be a solution to that systemic problem. Make a plan based on what the Holy Spirit is saying to you.

2. Post your action plan and testimony in the forum for this week.

3. This week you will receive via email the third of three brief questionnaires. In order to get credit for the course you must hit “reply”, answer the two questions and send it to us. If you do not wish to answer the questions you may choose to audit the course.



# APPENDIX

## SYSTEMIC POVERTY

*Paradigm 5: Nation transformation must be tangible, and the premier social indicator is the elimination of systemic poverty.*

Nowhere is the kingdom of darkness more entrenched in the world today than when it comes to the manifestations of systemic poverty. Systemic poverty is not a peripheral issue in the Bible. The elimination of poverty is central to the gospel message of redemption, and for that reason it is both a by-product and the most tangible social evidence of true, biblically based transformation. In fact, Jesus began His ministry by announcing good news to the poor; the Early Church had no needy people in its ranks (as I will show here in great detail); and the book of Revelation ends with a climactic parade of healthy and wealthy nations bringing their honor and glory to God. The elimination of systemic poverty may sound like a radical statement, but it is fully biblical and, if embraced, will have tremendous repercussions for the Church as we know it today—and even greater and more glorious ones for the world around us.

Our theology today, and particularly our eschatology, has become mystically skewed to the point that we have difficulty considering, much less embracing, this paradigm. Our view of the future tends to focus almost exclusively on escaping this *sin-sick* world to the exclusion of the potential of bettering things on Earth in general and of resolving

the plight of the poor in particular. There is nothing wrong with being heavenly minded. In fact, we are told to “set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth” (Col. 3:2). But the intent of this biblical exhortation is to obtain an eternal perspective with which we can effectually deal with challenges on Earth, not escape them.

This tendency is further accentuated by fear of contamination by a social gospel that emphasizes doing good (even excellent) works that address social evils to the exclusion of addressing the eternal issues of the soul—or the so-called *name it and claim it* theology that short-circuits the powerful grace of God available to bring about authentic transformation—by substituting a quick-fix version based on shallow theology and flawed interpretation. To couch this new paradigm in a proper context, three observations must be made. First, I am referring to a *social* indicator, not an ethereal or “spiritual” one. By “social” I mean that which is reflected in the community and can be measured and documented: The crime rate goes down, per capita income goes up, more students are graduating. These are measurable social indicators. Second, the poverty I am discussing is *systemic* poverty, not individual poverty. And third, the causes for *personal* poverty are multiple and usually self-inflicted, such as laziness, addiction or procrastination.

*Systemic* poverty is different from *personal* poverty in that it is something that most people are born into and their fate is dictated

and controlled by it. Those who are not born into it are targets to be brought into it. That is why it must be eliminated—because it reflects a scheme that is diabolical in design and evil in its implementation. It deprives masses of people of their daily bread by stealing the fruit of their labor and keeping them in social misery.

## WHAT IS POVERTY?

The online encyclopedia Wikipedia defines “poverty” as “a condition in which a person or community is deprived of, or lacks the essentials for, a minimum standard of well-being and life.” Thus, the essence of poverty is the lack of resources that are essential for living with dignity.

What then is systemic poverty? It is an all-encompassing socio-economic structure that keeps people deprived. It exists because of an institutionalized attitude that legitimizes its twin evil premises that

(1) some people deserve more opportunity than others, and that (2) there is not much that can or should be done about this prevailing social injustice—similar to how slavery was justified in the past. Because this evil is systemic, it will not be eradicated by simply taking care of individuals at the micro level or providing massive aid at the macro level. It must be uprooted.

For example, prior to emancipation, there were compassionate white people in the American South who took good care of their slaves, but their actions did not eliminate slavery. They merely alleviated conditions for a few. It took the Civil War and the dismantling of the Old South for slavery to cease legally, and an additional hundred years and

the Civil Rights Movement for its cultural conditioning and imprint to be ejected from the national psyche.

Let’s now look at a definition for the *poverty* side of the term.

There are different kinds of poverty indicators. Economists use the expression “poverty line” to describe the minimum level of income deemed necessary to achieve an adequate standard of living. Populations are then classified as above or below it. However, a simple monetary standard is inadequate because what is considered poor in the USA would easily qualify as rich in most Third World countries. Poverty is also understood as the lack of material resources, such as food, safe drinking water, and shelter, or social resources, such as access to information, education, health care, social status, political power, or the opportunity to develop meaningful connections with other people in society.

For the purpose of this book, I define *poverty* as “lacking our daily bread” and *systemic poverty* as “the structure that perpetuates such deficiency.” This definition, extrapolated from the Lord’s Prayer, though uncommonly simple, is as comprehensive as the one provided by the editors at Wikipedia. To expand on this point, let’s examine each of the core words: “our,” “daily” and “bread.” The term “our” points to the corporate dimension of life. Provision is necessary, not just for *me* but also for *others* who comprise the community I am part of. Furthermore, this provision has to have continuity; it has to be a *daily* occurrence. The exact words in the Lord’s Prayer are “Give us *this day* our *daily* bread” (Matt. 6:11, emphasis added). It is meant to be a *predictable* daily occurrence. The recipient must know, or at least have

hope, that tomorrow is part of a continuum and not a crisis waiting to happen. And finally, *bread* speaks of food that has substance and nutrition. The broader context points to a loving God as the source, *Our Father who art in heaven*, and describes provision as a gift (“give us”).

## FOUR KINDS OF POVERTY

From these observations, I see four kinds of poverty: spiritual, relational, motivational and material.

1. *Spiritual poverty* afflicts those who do not know that God is their father.
2. *Relational poverty* encompasses those whose focus is on themselves at the expense of the community they are a part of.
3. *Motivational poverty* is a state of hopelessness that engulfs those who have no adequate way or means (or the confidence) to tackle tomorrow’s challenges.
4. *Material poverty* impacts those who lack the basic necessities to sustain themselves.

The flip side of these four dimensions of poverty is spiritual, relational, motivational (hope-filled) and material *wealth*.

Why would our Lord make food (bread) such a central point? Because the food supply is the most volatile component of the marketplace. As I state in my book *Prayer Evangelism*:

Almost anything can go wrong in the marketplace—inflation, political corruption, even a natural disaster—and the city (or the nation) will put up with it and eventually recover. But if the food supply becomes critically insufficient, then revolutions happen, rulers lose their heads and chaos ensues until order

is restored, first in the food supply and eventually in all other areas of the marketplace. A calamitous disruption in the food supply is the societal equivalent of a heart attack.<sup>1</sup>

This is also true for individuals. People can live without everything but food, air and water; but food is the ingredient that provides the energy needed for vibrant productivity.

Missionaries and inner-city workers know about the difficulty of communicating the gospel to starving people without first addressing their hunger. This same understanding was a critical component of the Spirit-led strategy of the Early Church, which made the regular provision of food for the hungry an integral part of its ministry because it knew that this was the arena where spiritual oppression and its resulting deprivation were most visibly and painfully felt.



This social blight is not abstract—quite the opposite is true: Poverty and the resulting hunger, if left unabated, will result in very real starvation. Throughout the Old Testament the penalty for idolatry took the form of famine, pestilence or drought. The brunt of such judgment was always felt in the marketplace and particularly in the stomachs of the people. Food became scarce and eventually insufficient. On the other hand, 2 Chronicles 7:14 teaches that if we get right with God, He will, after granting forgiveness for our sins, heal the land. The implication is impossible to miss: The land that produced

insufficiently will once again produce abundant food.

Two things can cause this insufficiency: (1) a divine judgment as a result of sin, or (2) an evil system that enables a few to hoard resources at the expense of many. This is the difference between self-inflicted poverty and systemic poverty. To resolve the first case requires personal and corporate repentance, which opens the door for God to intervene. The second has to be dismantled by the Church, first within its own ranks where mindsets need to be changed and transforming patterns of behavior established, and subsequently into society until it is transformed. The latter is not only possible but also desirable. God wants it to happen, and the leaders of nations are wide open to it since poverty is not only a bane to those who suffer it, but it is also a blight on those who have not been able to resolve it.

Please note that I am not advocating a socialistic approach that imposes a redistribution of wealth. What I am referring to is the social and spiritual blindness of modern-day “rich young rulers” who fail to enter into the kingdom of God because they have too many idle possessions and no concern whatsoever for those who are utterly dispossessed. They could greatly help others by allowing much of their wealth to flow back into the market capital and thus improve the common good. It was exactly that reluctance that kept the young aristocrat mentioned in Matthew 19:22 from entering into what he, of his own volition, came asking Jesus for: “When the young man heard this statement, he went away grieving; for he was one who owned much property.” Note that Jesus had not asked the rich young ruler to sell his possessions and *give* the money to the poor.

He told him, “Sell your possessions and give to the poor” (v. 21). There is no “it” between “give” and “to.”

How is a rich person expected to help the poor? It is not by he himself becoming poor through self-dispossession, but by moving idle capital (possessions or property) into the marketplace for the purpose of developing products and creating jobs as well as making profits with

which to alleviate the plight of the poor. Keeping those assets from entering the marketplace, whether out of fear, selfishness, insecurity or all of those reasons, will negatively impact the economy (and, by extension, those who need help the most) by failing to generate new capital.

The point is this: Poverty is not only the *lack of something* but also the *fear of lacking something*. One reason that poor people are kept poor is because those who control the marketplace live in emotional and spiritual poverty themselves, even though they are materially rich. Enough is never enough for them, and the resulting fear causes moral paucity.

The result is that the rich get richer, through hoarding, but not happier or more fulfilled, and the poor are enchained to hopelessness. As a result, the future of the nation is mortgaged because its main assets—its people—have been bridled.

Could it be for that reason that Jesus’ parables and miracles so often touched on issues and circumstances involving money and assets—because He was dealing with systemic issues? It is no coincidence that almost all of the miracles of the Gospels and the book of Acts occurred in the economic sector (mar-



ketplace) of the city. God was addressing a new way of doing business.

I wish to submit that the case for the elimination of systemic poverty is so intrinsically woven into the Scriptures that we have failed to see it, much less embrace it as a possibility, basically because it is impossible to

separate the two. To address this in an orderly way, in the following chapters I have organized the discussion into four parts: the *biblical basis*, the *Early Church experience*, *individual examples*, and *emerging corporate prototypes*.

From chapter 11 in Transformation

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