

## Calling the Church:

Today, nearly a billion people live trapped in extreme poverty – a poverty distinguished by true hopelessness, desperation, and unimaginable suffering.

Throughout His Word, God plainly calls His people to help the least and the last. We note that in Christ's ministry, there was harmony between His words and his actions, and sharp criticism for those who talked the right talk but whose actions betrayed an indifferent or hardened heart.

We are shamed to learn that our nation's churches devote, on average, less than **2%** of their annual budgets to helping those who live in extreme poverty around the world – despite the crystal clear biblical mandate for God's people to compassionately exercise justice, mercy, and care towards the least and last.

We are, by far, the wealthiest believers and churches on the face of the earth; it is within our power to make a true difference. Yes, Lazarus lies suffering at our gate, and like the rich man, we-the-Church are passing him by. *This apparent indifference deforms our discipleship, compromises the integrity, relevance, and reputation of our churches, and is a profoundly negative witness to a watching world.* Will we, the American Church, go down in history as those who, blessed with an abundance of resources, stood passively by, self-absorbed, preferring to fund self-serving internal programs to the near exclusion of external ministries that could have lifted the world's most desperately poor people out of their suffering? Surely, we can do better than this!

To correct this does not require recreating the “missions” wheel; nor does it require unique expertise or tremendous resources or new programs or sending more teams. A more efficient and effective solution would be to simply avail ourselves, *individually and corporately*, of one of the most powerful tools for alleviating extreme poverty in the name of Christ ever developed.... The Parachurch. Already supported by millions of Christ's followers, these explicitly Christian humanitarian organizations are truly God's people, doing God's work, in His way, in His name, and for His glory – and many are extraordinarily effective.

### **Our churches are in the ideal position to champion and support the work of these servant organizations.**

- We urge our churches to consider what their role could be in *championing* the work of the parachurch – actively promoting the parachurch's work and offering church members regular opportunities to make sacrificial contributions to support their efforts to reach out in Christ's love to the least and the last.
- We urge our churches to consider *directly supporting* the work of these organizations with additional dollars from their own operating budgets as a highly effective and efficient way to minister to the world's poorest.
- We recognize that both of these actions involve lifestyle choices for us as believers, *and* for our churches. Yet, Christ's call to *intentional and obedient sacrifice*, to pick up our cross and follow Him, both individually and corporately, is unmistakably clear.

We-the-Church must do better. Our churches must choose between continuing to proclaim indifference – or proclaiming compassion, love, and hope in the name of Christ. **The implications for our collective witness to a watching world are staggering.** Please join us in challenging ourselves, our brothers and sisters, and our churches to a bolder and more faithful action in tangibly demonstrating God's love for the “least of these.”

Isaiah 58:5-8 burns in our hearts; we join with Jesus in praying:

**“Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”**