

The background of the slide is a blurred image of a library or study area. In the foreground, there is an open book with a pen resting on it. The book's pages are visible, showing some text and a small diagram. The overall lighting is soft and warm, creating a scholarly atmosphere.

01.

THEOLOGY OF MISSIONS

At The Vine, we believe that God desires for all humanity to be in restorative relationships with himself, between each other, and with His creation. The demonstration of these relationships is reflected across scripture, from the story of creation, to the reconciling work of Jesus, to the future renewal of all things promised through Christ.

As we personally experience this restoration in our lives, God calls us to turn that transformation outward by caring for our neighbour's physical needs (Luke 10:25–37, Mark 12:30–31) and drawing them to Him through discipleship and evangelism (Matthew 28:16–20). These actions form the foundation of our approach to missional and justice efforts which seek the total transformation of our lives to align with God's purposes.

All Christian mission is grounded in the nature of God himself who redeems and restores all things through Jesus Christ, the self-sacrificing missionary sent from heaven to earth. Our missional efforts are used by God in the redemption and restoration of broken relationships between Him and His creation.


OUR APPROACH

Our approach to missions and justice work is based on recognising the intrinsic value and dignity within humanity and all His creation. By acknowledging this we also recognise that any thought or action which diminishes or violates those principles should be seen as a sinful distortion of God's intention.

When we capture the true value and dignity of His creation, our response should be to reject activities that undermine God's original intention and work towards correcting the violations which distort it.

Our response in the face of injustice is to cry out as the Israelites did in the past. Our biblical mandate is to proclaim freedom for the captives, to care for the vulnerable, and humble the oppressors. Our desire should be for people to experience the full restoration of a redeemed relationship with their Creator. That desire is what underlines our approach to missions. Living missionally is our response in recognising that God created us with this purpose, and, that His creation exists to glorify Him.



A background photograph of a man in a brown cap and a light-colored vest over a striped shirt, standing behind a stall. Several clear plastic bags filled with yellowish liquid or soft produce are hanging from green ropes. The scene is outdoors, with a metal fence and other people visible in the blurred background.

02.

**POVERTY &
ECONOMIC
EMPOWERMENT**

Poverty is an issue that is prevalent across our world. We see the contrast between those with opportunities and resources and those - without - simply by walking through our neighbourhoods. For many of us, our response to poverty is often to see how the needs of the individual can be met by financial solution.

While poverty is an economic issue, the impact that it has on individuals stretches beyond material and financial needs. Poverty has the potential to disrupt all areas of human flourishing and our response should recognise the complexity and its interconnected nature. and financial needs. Poverty has the potential to disrupt all areas of human flourishing and our response should recognise the complexity and its interconnected nature.

What is poverty?

Like so many other injustices that we see and encounter - poverty is a result of broken relationships and a distortion of God's desire for humanity. This brokenness influences our relationships with God, with ourselves, towards others, and His creation. It influences how we live our lives, how we take advantage of opportunities, use resources, and how economic, political, and social systems can oppress people.

While we often define poverty primarily by a lack of material wealth, such as insufficient access to money or economic opportunities, the reality is poverty has many faces. It varies from place to place and how it impacts people's ability to live a normal life differs depending on context.

In this sense, poverty is being caught in a state without many essential goods and services and being deprived of resources and opportunities to live a normal life. In a review of the report *Voices of the Poor* (Deepa Narayan), Brian Fikkert and Steve Corbett of the Chalmers Center for Economic Development said that people living in poverty "tend to describe their condition in far more psychological and social terms. Poor people typically talk in terms of shame, inferiority, powerlessness, depression, social isolation, and voicelessness."

These realities imply that poverty erodes the dignity and identity of a person and their ability to flourish in the way that God created them.

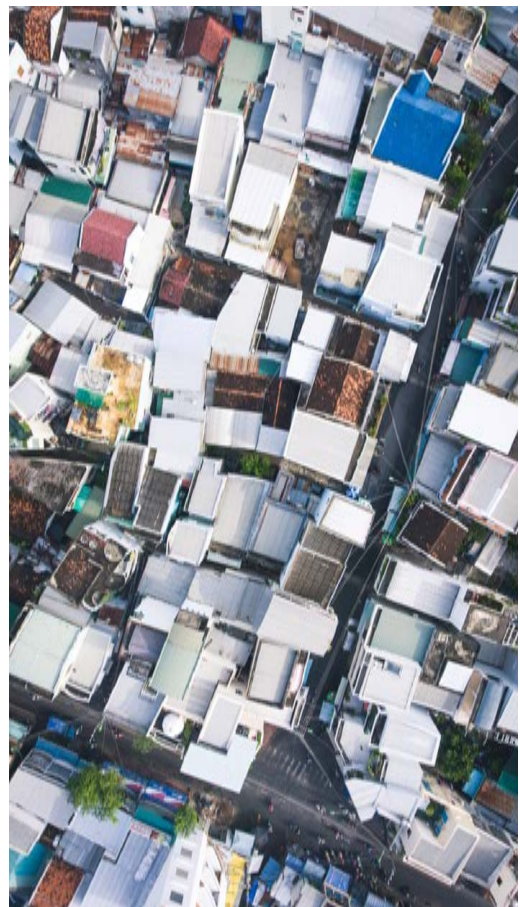
Dignity and Value

We are designed to reflect God's heart and be people that seek restoration and empowerment for people living in poverty. God cares deeply for the poor and He calls us to provide for the spiritual, personal, social and material needs of those around us.

The flourishing of humanity depends on the restoration of relationships. The passage from 2 Kings 4:1-7 offers an insight into how we can approach the needs of the people living in poverty.

"Poverty is hunger. Poverty is a lack of shelter. Poverty is being sick and not being able to see a doctor. Poverty is not having access to school and not knowing how to read. Poverty is not having a job, is fear for the future, living one day at a time."

World Bank



In this story, the wife of a deceased prophet came to Elisha with an emotional plea for help. Her husband had passed away while owing money to someone and this person, intent on recuperating his loss, was threatening to enslave her two sons. In the opening passages, we can immediately see the seriousness of her circumstances. Not only did the widow not have financial resources to pay this debt, we also read that she did not have many other possessions - except a small jar of olive oil.

Elisha, recognising her need responded in a way that took compassion on the woman - while also empowering her to be part of her restoration. Instead of providing the money for the debt or trying to convince the creditor to show compassion, he called her to collect as many jars as she could find and through God's provision accumulate enough oil that she could then sell, pay off the debt, and meet her family's material needs.

His response also restored the widow's relationship with God. Instead of positioning himself as her saviour, the widow experienced the direct provision from her Creator and her faith and trust in Him was renewed and restored.

Our partners having many stories which show how lives can be redeemed and restored through opportunities that meet the many needs of people living in poverty. Take the time to read through some of these and use them to explore the question of "what role can I play in God's redemptive story for people living in poverty?"

COLLECTION OF RESOURCES

The issue of poverty is complex and multi-faceted. To gain a deeper understanding of this area, its impact, and how organisations are engaging with the needs of people facing these challenges check out these resources.

- **Voices of the Poor, Deepna Narayan**
- **Understanding Poverty, Tearfund.org**
- **When Helping Hurts, Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert**

An aerial photograph of a river meandering through a dense, green forest. The river is a dark, winding line that cuts through the vibrant green canopy. In the upper left, a small clearing shows a dirt road and some structures. The overall scene is a lush, natural landscape.

03.

**MISSIONS
PATHWAYS**

Missions was never intended to be restricted to a church ministry or special vocational calling. It is meant to permeate across all areas of our life. Each person's journey towards living missionally is deeply personal and reflective of where God is leading them. It is shaped by their skills, experiences, and passions. It allows for a personal connection between our faith and our skills to then influence systems of injustice and share the gospel.

Missions Pathways is designed to take you beyond knowing about an issue. It is a journey that empowers you to make a personal response. We do this by:

STEP 1 – COMMITTING TO PRAYERS

We believe prayer is at the core of all effective and impactful mission. We cannot effectively engage in missional efforts without continually seeking God's heart for justice and restoration while following His guidance on our involvement. We learn to fight battles through the armour and strategies He gives us. The best devised plans that don't carry God's heart will always be limited in their effect and reach.



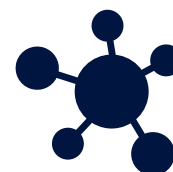
STEP 2 - BECOMING LEARNERS

The majority of broken and unjust systems that we see and experience are complex and have interconnected issues. The visible action that we consider unjust can often be just an expression of a much larger system which perpetuates and empowers that injustice. By positioning ourselves as learners we can explore the complexities and interconnected nature of injustices. Taking this posture can go against our natural desire to respond quickly however without it we may unknowingly hinder the efforts of others or even hurt the people we want to help.



STEP 3 - EXPLORE THE CONNECTIONS

The next step is to understand how the issue is interconnected across different people, industries, society, and perhaps even countries. With this knowledge we can begin to understand how we interface with it in our individual lives through the actions that we and others take on a daily basis. Gaining an understanding of the different components and our involvement will empower us to decide what we can do with our skills and resources to make a difference.



We can start this process by posing questions that are designed to understand the issue and direct future engagement. The resources highlighted in this pack are a starting point to gain a base understanding.

KEY QUESTIONS

- What is the underlying issue and how does it express itself?
- Why do vulnerable people experience this?
- What is the full impact that this has on people and society?
- How does it express itself in my city? Or in my day to day life?
- What would restoration look like if this issue was addressed?



STEP 4 - PLANNING OUR ACTION

With a broad knowledge of the issue, how it is connected across people and society, and an awareness on how we interact with it personally, we are now positioned to map out our personal response. There are a wide variety of ways we can respond to an issue and often the most impacting are determined by our skills, experiences, and passions. Planning our response takes discernment and wisdom – a plan that connects our skills and experiences can lead to long term and sustainable impact. Conversely, taking actions that are difficult to maintain over a longer term can short-circuit the impact or potentially create more damage.



Planning our response could include any or a mixture of the following:

1. Making lifestyle changes like consumption behaviors and how we interact with others
2. Supporting organizations financially or volunteering with our time and skills
3. Finding opportunities for short-term projects that allow us to engage more deeply with an organisation's work and add value to their efforts with our skills and experiences

Connecting with organisations that focus on the area that we are exploring can help guide the planning and future activities.

STEP 5 – ACTION AND ADVOCACY

Bringing others into the journey by sharing our personal response to an issue is one of the most effective advocacy tools that we can use. It provides an opportunity for our friends and coworkers to engage in the process and opens up the opportunity to share the faith that drives our response.

One of our partners, Tearfund provides a range of resources that will help you in this process. You can read more about mapping out your response [here](#)



Missions Pathways also helps facilitate this process for you through both our Inspire events and Catalyst. These opportunities are created with the purpose to not only inform and equip you but also invite others into that process.



04.

PARTNERS & ORGANISATIONS

The partnerships between The Vine, external organisations, and missionaries are a central part of our church's ability to empower work that brings redemption and restoration. We believe for us to effectively partner with others in serving the vulnerable and disadvantaged, we need to be strategic in identifying and building long-term relationships that reflect where God is leading us as a church and our congregation.

In response to our first Pathway on poverty and economic empowerment we intentionally considered partners that engage with both immediate relief and longer focused development efforts. Our partners carry out programs aimed at prevention, intervention, and restoration. You can learn more about our partners via their websites.

Branches of Hope

Branches of Hope is a local charity that provides support to asylum seekers and human trafficking victims in Hong Kong under two initiatives: Refugee Opportunity and Development (ROAD) and Stop Trafficking Of People (STOP). Both initiatives aim to provide comprehensive solutions and integrated approaches to restore dignity, justice and hope to the vulnerable and marginalised in the city.

<https://branchesofhope.org.hk/>



Christian Action

Christian Action provides a broad range of social services and social enterprises via supporting and empowering programmes for vulnerable and marginalised groups in Hong Kong and China. These include programs that focus on ethnic minorities, migrant workers, refugees, youth development and other support services.

<https://www.christian-action.org.hk/en/>



Inner City Ministries

Inner City Ministry serves one of the most underprivileged and vulnerable groups in Hong Kong: the local Nepalese community. They provide personal and community support with a desire to bring lasting transformation through Christian Ministry expressed in care programs, education and vocational training. They tackle a number of social issues including poverty, schooling, drugs, crime, mentorship, and language barriers.

<https://innercityministries.org/>



HOPE International

Hope International works with some of the world's most underserved communities through biblically based training, savings services, and loans that restore dignity and break the cycle of poverty. They identify with those living in poverty and invest into their dreams through microfinance tools.

<http://hopeinternational.org/>



International Care Ministries

ICM works towards alleviating poverty for the people in the Philippines and Uganda by creating supportive environments for hope to grow, then invests in building capacity for sustainable progress out of poverty. They do this by training people in health (hygiene, sanitation, disease prevention and nutrition), livelihood skills (small business skills training to earn money and save for the future), and childhood education (equipping moms to teach their children).

<https://branchesofhope.org.hk/>



Tear Fund

Tearfund is a Christian organisation that partners with churches in 50 of the world's poorest countries with hopes to tackle poverty and injustice through sustainable development. They do so through responding to immediate needs arising from natural disasters and mobilising churches to transform societies towards reduced inequality and sustainable

<https://www.tearfund.org/>

The logo for Tearfund consists of the word 'tearfund' in a white, lowercase, sans-serif font, centered within a solid orange rectangular background.