



# CIRCLE *of* PROTECTION

## Presidential Candidate Videos Study Guide

God's concern for hungry and poor people is a central theme of the Bible. And across all Christian traditions, responding to people in need is seen as a central responsibility of believers. Churches themselves engage in many ministries that provide assistance and opportunities to their members and neighbors in need. Most Christian leaders, recalling that Jesus said that *the nations* would be judged by how they treat "the least of these," agree that our nation (government) has an important role to play as well.

Over 100 Christian leaders – heads of denominations, presidents of seminaries, heads of national organizations and agencies – have asked all 2016 presidential candidates to say what they would do to "offer help and opportunity to hungry and poor people in the United States and around the world."

**The letter to the candidates, sent by the Circle of Protection, is on page 4. You may want to invite your group to scan the list of signers to see if they recognize any names or organizations.**

*What would you do as president to offer help and opportunity to hungry and poor people in the United States and around the world?*

*– Letter to presidential candidates*

In response, many of the leading candidates have produced short videos describing their approach to hunger and poverty.

### **Psalm 72 – A Point of Reference**

The letter to the candidates provides some biblical context:

God told Samuel, as he was choosing a national leader from among Jesse's offspring, to look at their hearts (1 Samuel 16). We will be calling on people of faith to examine presidential candidates to see if they have a heart for poor and hungry people. We want to know how each candidate proposes to fulfill the mandate to those who govern to "give deliverance to the needy" (Psalm 72).

Psalm 72 provides helpful perspective on the role of a government leader in relation to poverty. The Psalm is David's prayer for his son as Solomon is made king of Israel. Describing the ideal leader, he says:

. . . 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. (vs. 12-13)

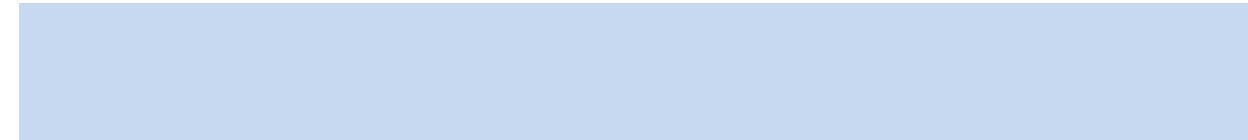
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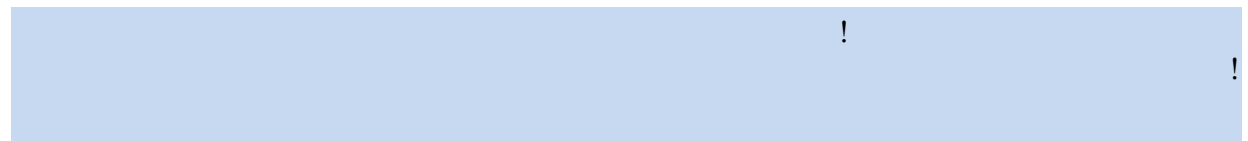
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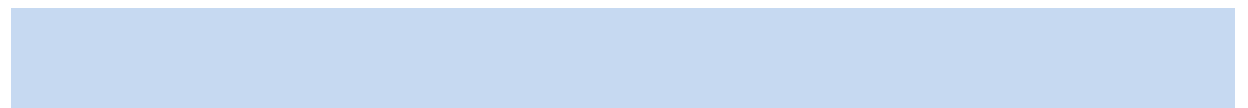
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The videos also have very different styles. If asked, we suggested that our desired format was to have the candidate directly speaking to the camera, without other speakers or background video. This, however, was not a requirement, so some videos are more “highly produced” than others.

The Circle of Protection promised that it would not evaluate the candidates’ policy proposals or endorse any candidate. The videos allow the candidates to speak for themselves. We do encourage those who watch them, however, to decide which best reflects biblical values.

### **Discussing the Videos**

Each of the candidates’ videos is 3 to 4 minutes in length. You may want to plan to view 2 or 3 videos during one session, allowing members of your group to compare and contrast the candidates’ approaches.

Consider using some of the following questions to guide the group’s discussion:

1. What facts about poverty does the candidate address?
  - a. *Do these facts seem to be in line with the statistics on hunger and poverty (See page 7 for a brief statistical overview)?*
  - b. *Do they ring true to your experience?*
  
2. The psalmist declares that “Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light for my path.”
  - a. *What faith values seem to be guiding the candidate’s direction?*
  - b. *How does the candidate’s attitude toward poverty compare with those expressed in Psalm 72?*
  
3. What roles does the candidate see for the church and the government in addressing hunger and poverty?
  - a. *What are the policy solutions that the candidate proposes?*
  
4. What do you think the impact of the candidate’s proposals would be on people living in poverty. . .
  - a. *in your local community?*
  - b. *in our global community?*

## **What Would You Do?**

A group desiring to dig deeper into this issue could challenge each of its members to say what they would do, if elected president, to “offer help and opportunity to hungry and poor people in the United States and around the world.” Members could write a single page statement – or they could use their smart phones to record a three minute video. Comparing and contrasting these statements with the candidates’ videos could provoke lively discussion.

## **Praying for Those Living in Poverty – and for the Candidates**

Loving God, You created the world in love and called us to be stewards of all that you have made. Help us to be good stewards who make your will done, on earth as it is in heaven. We know that you sent us your Son that we might have life and have it abundantly. Although you have graciously given us all that we need to survive, our mismanagement and poor stewardship of your bountiful creation has allowed poverty to continue to exist both in our own nation and across the world. Grant us both the will and the wisdom to work together to be good stewards who use your resources as intended – to produce abundant life for all people. Amen.

Sovereign God, Paul tells us that those who rule are your servants for our good. We pray for the men and women who are running for the office of President. May they truly seek your will and the good of all people. Give them your compassion and justice. And guide us, blessed as we are with the freedom to elect our own leaders, to choose a President who will bring deliverance and hope to those who live in poverty. In the name of Jesus our deliverer, Amen.



# CIRCLE *of* PROTECTION

Dear [Candidate]

Thank you for your willingness to stand for election to the office of president of the United States. The calling to public service is a sacred vocation. We hold you, and all of the candidates for nomination and election, in our prayers.

As national leaders from all the major branches of Christianity, we care deeply about many issues facing our country, but ending hunger and poverty is a top priority of our work together. We are praying for a president who will make ending hunger and poverty a top priority of his or her administration. Are you that leader?

We are making a simple request of each candidate and will publicly pursue your positive response:

**Please produce a three minute video telling the American people what you would do as president to offer help and opportunity to hungry and poor people in the United States and around the world.**

It is our intention to distribute candidates' videos broadly among our churches and to the public, as we did with similar videos produced by Governor Romney and President Obama in 2012. The Circle of Protection will not publicly evaluate your policy positions or endorse any candidate. Our goal is simply to make ending hunger and poverty part of our nation's election year dialog.

God told Samuel, as he was choosing a national leader from among Jesse's offspring, to look at their hearts (1 Samuel 16). We will be calling on people of faith to examine presidential candidates to see if they have a heart for poor and hungry people. We want to know how each candidate proposes to fulfil the mandate to those who govern to "give deliverance to the needy" (Psalm 72).

Your campaign may discuss this invitation with the Rev. Gary Cook by contacting him at [gcook@circleofprotection.us](mailto:gcook@circleofprotection.us). We ask that you reply within two months from the date you declare your candidacy.

Thank you again for your public service. May God bless and guide you in the months ahead.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Soto Albrecht, Moderator, Mennonite Church USA	Theological Seminary	Bishop Charles E. Blake, Sr., Presiding Bishop, Church of God in Christ	John L. Carr, Director, Initiative on Catholic Social Thought and Public Life, Georgetown University
Dr. Paul Alexander, Co-President, Evangelicals for Social Action	James H. Barnes, President, Bethel Seminary of Bethel University	Rev. Deborah C. Blue, Executive Minister, Evangelical Covenant Church	Dr. Iva E. Carruthers, General Secretary, Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference
Leith Anderson, President, National Association of Evangelicals	Stephan Bauman, President and CEO, World Relief	Rev. Dr. Ken Brooker Langston, Executive Director, Disciples Center for Public Witness (Disciples of Christ)	Noel Castellanos, CEO, Christian Community Development Association (CCDA)
Archbishop Vicken Aykazian, Executive Director of Ecumenical Office, Armenian Orthodox Church	Dr. A.D. Beacham, Jr., General Superintendent and Presiding Bishop, International Pentecostal Holiness Church	Tony Campolo, Founder, Evangelical Association for the Promotion of Education and the Red Letter Christian	Shane Claiborne, Founder, The Simple Way
Marv Baldwin, Executive Director, Foods Resource Bank	David L. Beckley, President, Rust College	Galen Carey, Vice President of Government Relations, National Association of Evangelicals	Dr. Gary Cook, President, Dallas Baptist University
Dr. Carroll A. Baltimore, Sr., President/CEO, Global Alliance Interfaith Networks (G.A.I.N.)	David Beckmann, President, Bread for the World	Patrick Carolan, Executive Director, Franciscan Action Network	Rev. Martin B. Copenhaver, President, Andover Newton Theological School
M. Craig Barnes, President, Princeton	Geoffrey Black, General Minister and President, United Church of Christ		

T. Scott Daniels, Dean, Azusa Pacific Seminary

Rev. Dr. Thomas R. De Vries, General Secretary, Reformed Church in America

Wendy J. Deichmann, President, United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio

Pat Donahoo, Executive Director, Disciples Women, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

Hal Donaldson, President, Convoy of Hope, Inc.

Robert Duffett, President, Eastern University

Daniel J. Earheart-Brown, President, Memphis Theological Seminary

Elizabeth A. Eaton, Presiding Bishop, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Gary L. Edmonds, President/CEO, Food for the Hungry

Jason Fileta, Director, Micah Challenge USA

Dr. Gaddis J. Faulcon, Interim President, Shaw University

Mark Francis, President, Catholic Theological Union

Art Gay, Minister at Large, Evangelical Initiatives International

Sheila K. Gilbert, National President, Society of St. Vincent de Paul, Council of the United States

Dr. David Emmanuel Goatley, Executive Secretary-Treasurer, Lott Carey Convention

Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, General Secretary Emeritus, Reformed Church in America

David Greenhaw, President, Eden Theological Seminary

Charlotte Haberaecker, President and CEO, Lutheran Services in America

Kevin Hagan, President and CEO, Feed the Children

Ambassador Tony Hall, Executive Director, Alliance to End Hunger

Rev. Sekinah Hamlin, Director, Ecumenical Poverty Initiative

Herman Harmelink, III, Ecumenical Officer, International Council of Community Churches

Richard B. Hays, Dean, Duke University Divinity School

Mitch Hescox, President, Evangelical Environmental Network

Dennis P. Hollinger, President, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary

Virginia Holmstrom, Executive Director, American Baptist Women's Ministries, American Baptist Churches, USA

Joel Hunter, Senior Pastor, Northland: A Church Distributed

Dale T. Irvin, President, New York Theological Seminary

Edison O. Jackson, Ed. D., President, Bethune-Cookman University

Susan Jackson-Dowd, Executive Director, Presbyterian Women

The Most Rev. Katharine Jefferts Schori, Presiding Bishop and Primate, The Episcopal Church

Commissioner David E. Jeffrey, National Commander, The Salvation Army

Sr. Carol Keehan, SC, President and CEO, Catholic Health Association

Bishop David Kendall, Bishop, Free Methodist Church USA

Very Rev. Timothy P Kesicki, S.J., President, Jesuit Conference

Kah-Jin Jeffrey Kuan, President, Claremont School of Theology

Mark Labberton, President, Fuller Theological Seminary

Marilyn Lariviere, National President, Church Women United, Inc.

Eric LeCompte, Executive Director, Jubilee U.S.A. Network

Dr. David Lose, President, Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia

Jan Love, Dean, Candler School of Theology of Emory University

Jo Anne Lyon, General Superintendent, The Wesleyan Church

Bishop Denis Madden, Auxiliary Bishop, Catholic Archdiocese of Baltimore

Carlos Malave, Executive Director, Christian Churches Together in the USA

Sister Donna Markham, O.P., PhD, President-Elect, Catholic Charities USA

Reverend Dr. David F. McAllister-Wilson, President, Wesley Theological Seminary

John McCullough, Executive Director and CEO, Church World Service

James McDonald, President, San Francisco Theological Seminary

Julius T. Medenblik, President, Calvin Theological Seminary

Mary Elizabeth Moore, Dean, Boston University School of Theology

Dr. Shirley Mullen, President, Houghton College

Rich Nathan, Senior Pastor, Vineyard Columbus

Stanley J. Noffsinger, General Secretary, Church of the Brethren

Randall O'Brien, Th.D., President, Carson-Newman University

Robert Parham, Executive Director, Baptist Ethics Center

Gradye Parsons, Stated Clerk of the General Assembly, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Richard E. Pates, Bishop, Catholic Diocese of Des Moines

Suzii Paynter, Executive Coordinator, Cooperative Baptist Fellowship

Roy L. Peterson, President, American Bible Society

Riess Potterveld, President, Graduate Theological Union (An interreligious institution)

Soong-Chan Rah, Milton B. Engbretson Associate Professor of Church Growth and Evangelism, North Park University

Bishop Lawrence Reddick III, Senior Bishop, Christian Methodist Episcopal Church

Rev. Samuel Rodriguez, President, National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference

Andrew Ryskamp, Director, World Renew

Rev. Gabriel Salguero, President, National Latino Evangelical Coalition

Bishop Monroe Saunders, Presiding Bishop, United Church of Jesus Christ (Apostolic)

Michael G. Scales, President, Nyack College and Alliance Theological Seminary

Stephen F. Schneck, Ph.D., Director, Institute for Policy Research & Catholic Studies, The Catholic University of

Dr. Jake Schrum, President, Emory and Henry College

Rev. Dr. Julius R. Scruggs, President, National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc.

Dr. Ronald J. Sider, Senior Distinguished Professor of Theology, Holistic Ministry, and Public Policy, Palmer Seminary at Eastern University

Art Simon, President Emeritus, Bread for the World

Richard Stearns, President, World Vision United States

Gregory Sterling, Dean, Yale University Divinity School

Rev. Ervin R. Stutzman, Executive Director, Mennonite Church USA

Dr. Carla Sunberg, President, Nazarene Theological Seminary

Bishop Mary Ann Swenson, President of the General Commission on Christian Unity and Inter-religious Concerns, United Methodist Church

Steve Timmermans, Executive Director, Christian Reformed Church in North America

Rev. Samuel C. Tolbert, Jr., President, National Baptist Church of America, Inc.

Javier Viera, Dean, Drew University Theological School

Jim Wallis, President and Founder, Sojourners

Gary Walter, President, Evangelical Covenant Church

Rev. Dr. Sharon Watkins, General Minister and President, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

Dr. Robert K. Welsh, President, Council on Christian Unity

Dr. Barbara Williams-Skinner, Co-Facilitator, National African American Clergy Network

Jim Winkler, President and General Secretary, National Council of Churches of Christ

# Poverty and Hunger Facts

## United States

Poverty (U.S. Census Bureau data for 2014):

- 46.7 million people (14.8 percent) were in poverty.
- 15.5 million (21.1 percent) children under the age of 18 were in poverty.
- 4.6 million (10 percent) seniors 65 and older were in poverty.

Hunger (USDA data for 2014):

- 1 in 7 U.S. households were food insecure (unsure at some point how they would provide food for their next meal).
- More than 48 million people lived in food insecure households.
- 15.3 million children (1 in 5) lived in food insecure households.

## Worldwide

Poverty (World Bank data)

- In 2012, 12.7 percent of the world's population lived at or below \$1.90 a day. That's down from 37 percent in 1990 and 44 percent in 1981.
- This means that, in 2012, 896 million people lived on less than \$1.90 a day, compared with 1.95 billion in 1990, and 1.99 billion in 1981.
- Despite progress, the poverty rate in Sub-Saharan Africa is 42%.

Hunger (World Food Program data)

- 795 million people (about 1 in 9) in the world do not have enough food to lead a healthy active life.
- Asia is the continent with the most hungry people; sub-Saharan Africa has the highest prevalence (1 in 4).
- Poor nutrition causes 45% of deaths in children under 5 (3.1 million each year).