

# COLLAPSE

WES MOORE

## CHAPTER 4: The poor are not always good Group Study Leader Guide

### General Instructions:

- Have the students read the book chapter before meeting to discuss its principles.
- There is no handout for group members. Use the group study questions at the end of each chapter in the book as the basis for the discussion.
- The section below provides the location of question answers in the book (page and paragraph), answers for those questions, and the goal of the question.

### Chapter 4 Group Study Questions Discussion Key

1. Explain the rules that exist in America that tend to prevent rich businesses from taking advantage of poor workers.
  - a. Answer location: Page 34 paragraph 3 through page 35, paragraph 2.
  - b. Answer in brief: In America, employees can quit a job anytime they want and employers are free to pay employees more to come work for them. This freedom makes it impossible to force a worker to accept lower wages than he or she is worth.
  - c. Goal of the question: To help the student see that it is impossible for employers to pay workers lower than market rates on a widespread scale.
2. Explain how competition between employers (like Wal-Mart and Target) keeps them from paying their employees less than they are truly worth.
  - a. Answer location: Page 34 paragraph 3 through page 35, paragraph 2.
  - b. Answer in brief: Competition means employers must pay workers a fair wage or another employer will.
  - c. Goal of the question: To help the student see that it is impossible for employers to pay workers lower than market rates on a widespread scale.
3. Fill in the blank: “\_\_\_\_\_ are the answer to your low wage problem, not your employer or the government.” Why is this true?
  - a. Answer location: Page 36, paragraph 2.
  - b. Answer in brief: You. This is true because, in a free market, the employee’s individual value determines his or her pay rate. Therefore, if a person wants to make more, he must take the initiative to increase his value in the market.
  - c. Goal of the question: To help the student see that personal responsibility is the

best way to improve one's wages, not government intervention.

4. According to the chapter, in 2017, the top 1% of U.S. wage earners paid \$ \_\_\_\_\_ billion in income taxes, while the bottom 90% paid \$ \_\_\_\_\_. So, who paid more? Does this surprise you? Why or why not?
  - a. Answer location: Page 36, paragraph 3.
  - b. Answer in brief: 616, 479. The top 1% paid 28% more tax.
  - c. Goal of the question: To show the student how much more the rich pay in taxes than others.
5. According to the chapter, the top 50% of wage earners paid what percentage of the income taxes in the nation: 50%, 75%, or 97%? Again, were you surprised? Why or why not?
  - a. Answer location: Page 36, paragraph 4.
  - b. Answer in brief: 97%.
  - c. Goal of the question: To show the student how much more the rich pay in taxes than others.
6. The chapter stated, "Welfare paid more than a minimum wage job in 35 states, and, in 13 states, welfare benefits exceeded \$16 per hour. Hawaii had the highest value of welfare benefits at just over \$54,000 per year, the District of Columbia was second at \$47,000, and Massachusetts third at just under \$47,000. In hourly rate terms, this works out to between \$23 and \$26 per hour." What does this mean for the claim that the poor in America are not provided for by the rich?
  - a. Answer location: Page 37, paragraph 1.
  - b. Answer in brief: This means this claim is false. If it wasn't for the tax income provided by the rich, the poor would not receive the generous level of benefits they do.
  - c. Goal of the question: To show the student that 1) the poor are provided for very well in America and 2) this support comes from the rich.
7. Is the following statement true or false? "If you are on welfare in America, you are in the top 20% of income earners in the world." Explain your answer.
  - a. Answer location: Page 37, paragraph 2.
  - b. Answer in brief: The statement is true. According to Forbes Magazine, if you earn \$9,000 per year, you are in the top 20% of income earners in the world. In America, the lowest level of welfare benefits is equivalent to a \$19,000 per year income.
  - c. Goal of the question: To show the student how well the poor are provided for in America.
8. Share some Bible verses from the chapter that show God's love for the poor. Which one

moved you the most?

- a. Answer location: Page 40, paragraph 1.
  - b. Answer in brief: The chapter discusses Deuteronomy 15:7-8, Deuteronomy 24:19, and Luke 14:13-14 as verses that relate to God's love for the poor.
  - c. Goal of the question: To show the student that God cares for the poor.
9. Explain this statement: A man who is poor because he is lazy is not poor in God's eyes.
- a. Answer location: This is not from a specific page in the book. It can be implied from the discussion of the lazy on page 40, paragraphs 2-3.
  - b. Answer in brief: People who live in poverty because they are lazy are not considered poor in God's eyes. Their poverty is not because of something they could not control; they have chosen poverty through their unwillingness to work. We are not bound to help these kinds of people .
  - c. Goal of the question: To show the student that not all poor people are poor because of injustice. Many are poor because they are lazy.
10. How do such high levels of government benefits for the poor actually keep them from working? Explain your answer.
- a. Answer location: Page 41, paragraph 1 through page 42, paragraph 5 (Cato Institute quote).
  - b. Answer in brief: When a person can make so much not working, what incentive do they have to get off welfare and find a job?
  - c. Goal of the question: To help the student see that high benefit levels actually compound the problem of the poor.