

*Missional Entrepreneurs:
How Values-Based Enterprises Build Freedom from
Chronic Poverty*

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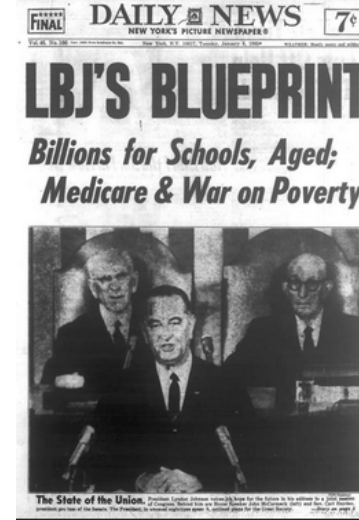
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A War Not Won

- Lyndon Johnson
 - State of the Union address, 1964
 - Committed U.S. to an “...unconditional war on poverty...”
- By 50th anniversary, \$22 trillion spent...much more since
- Early drop, then poverty cycles: 11% to 15%
 - Rise in intergenerational poverty
- Widening economic and cultural gap between poor and non-poor



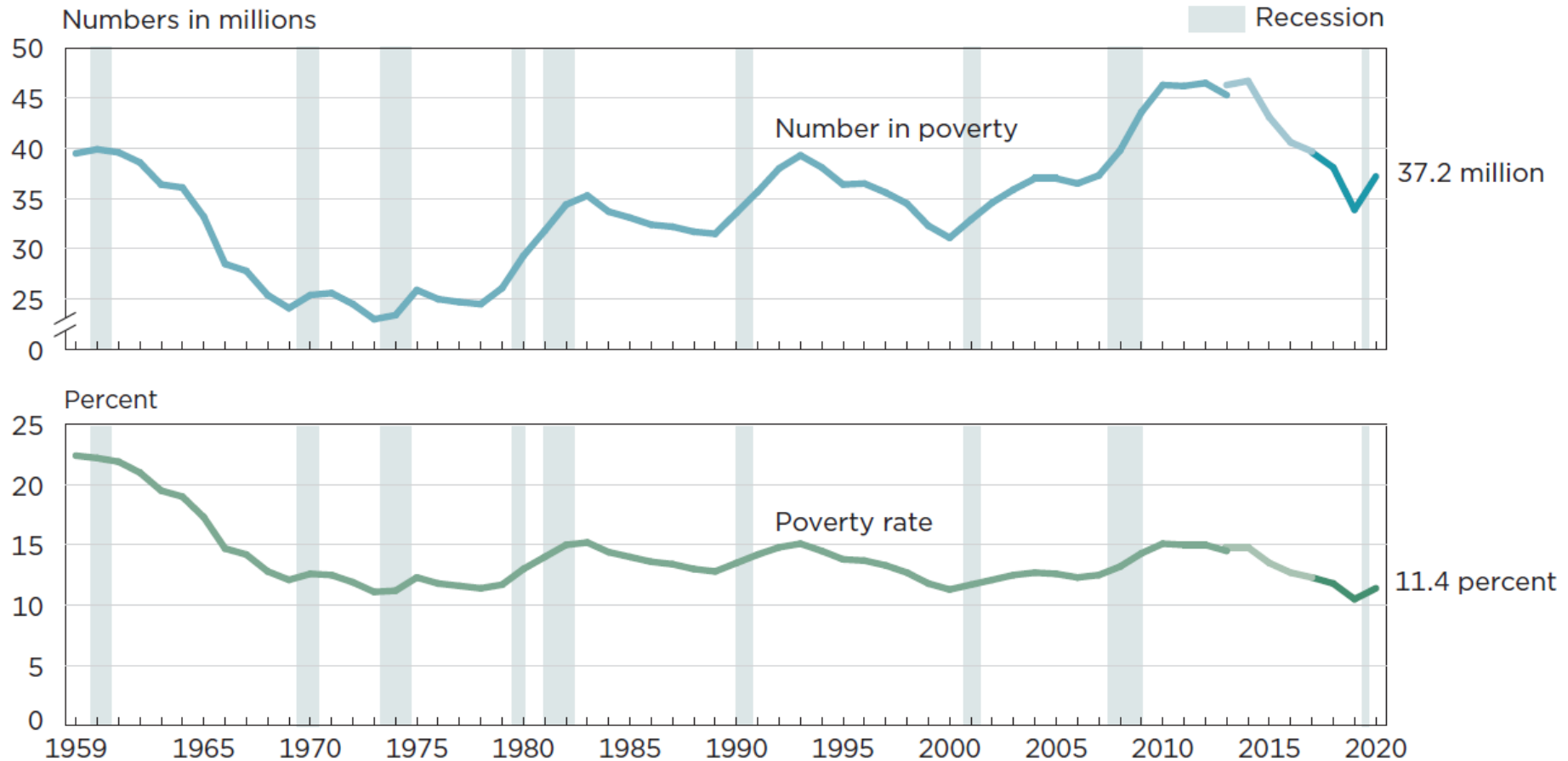
Today: Four Big Ideas

1. We cannot win the war on poverty as we now wage it.
 - Policy makers isolated from the nature of poverty and the dependence trap
 - Define poverty in economic terms
2. We need a more holistic understanding of poverty
 - Economic poverty
 - Social poverty
 - Spiritual poverty – marred personal identity
3. Wellness of human soul, healing of personal identity must accompany relief to gain economic freedom
 - Practice of virtue begins the healing process
4. The “Missional Entrepreneurs” are a part of the solution
 - Differ fundamentally from the large-scale poverty programs
 - Eleos Ministries – faith-based 501 (c) 3
 - Ripple of One – educational 501 (c) 3

Stalemate in War on Poverty

Number in Poverty and Poverty Rate: 1959 to 2020

(Population as of March of the following year)



Notes: The data for 2017 and beyond reflect the implementation of an updated processing system. The data for 2013 and beyond reflect the implementation of the redesigned income questions. Refer to Table B-4 for historical footnotes. The data points are placed at the midpoints of the respective years. Information on recessions is available in Appendix A. Information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions is available at <<https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/cps/techdocs/cpsmar21.pdf>>.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 1960 to 2021 Annual Social and Economic Supplements (CPS ASEC).

Limited Warriors: Poverty as Abstraction

- Agencies remote from communities served
 - Geography
 - Culture
- Very large scale
 - HHS \$95 billion operating budget FY 2021
- Political understanding of the problem
 - Solutions designed by legislative compromise
- Know their beneficiaries as legislated categories, a demographic, an abstraction
- Long chain of information filters between policy makers and beneficiaries
- Poverty defined in economic terms
 - Leads to economic “solutions”



Institutionalized Compassion

So...that's the nature of the problem we face

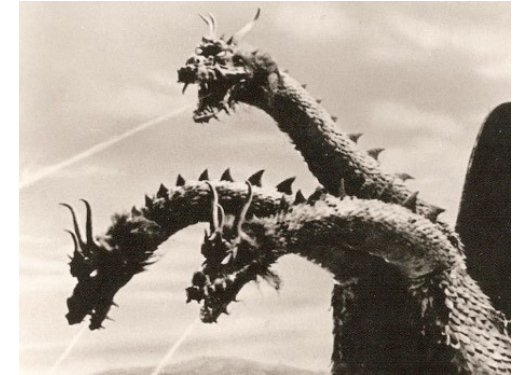
Questions? Comments?

On to Idea 2: We need a more holistic understanding of poverty: economic poverty; social poverty; spiritual poverty – marred personal identity

Toward a more holistic understanding: three manifestations of poverty



- Economic manifestation
 - Annual income under \$26,000 for family of 4
 - 19.5% of Blacks
 - 17 % of Hispanics
 - 24.7% of those w/o H.S. education (all races)
- Social manifestation
 - Habitual behaviors inconsistent with personal and economic freedom
 - Lack of supporting network: parents, family, mentors, work associates
 - Unskilled in interpersonal relations, dispute resolution
 - *Hillbilly Elegy*, by J.D. Vance
 - *Tattoos on the Heart*, by Gregory Boyle



Three Manifestations (cont.)

- Spiritual Manifestation
 - Most fundamentally, crisis of the human soul
 - First observed by missionaries in Africa and Asia*
 - Generally unrecognized by public agencies
 - Late 1990s World Bank study: Europe v. poor nations of Africa, SA
 - 2000: interviewed 20,000 persons trapped in poverty in 24 countries:
 - Described realities in terms of human brokenness: shame, inferiority, depression, powerless, no meaning to life, helpless
 - **Conditioned helplessness blunts well-intended economic aid**

*See: Myers or Corbett & Fikkert in Appendix

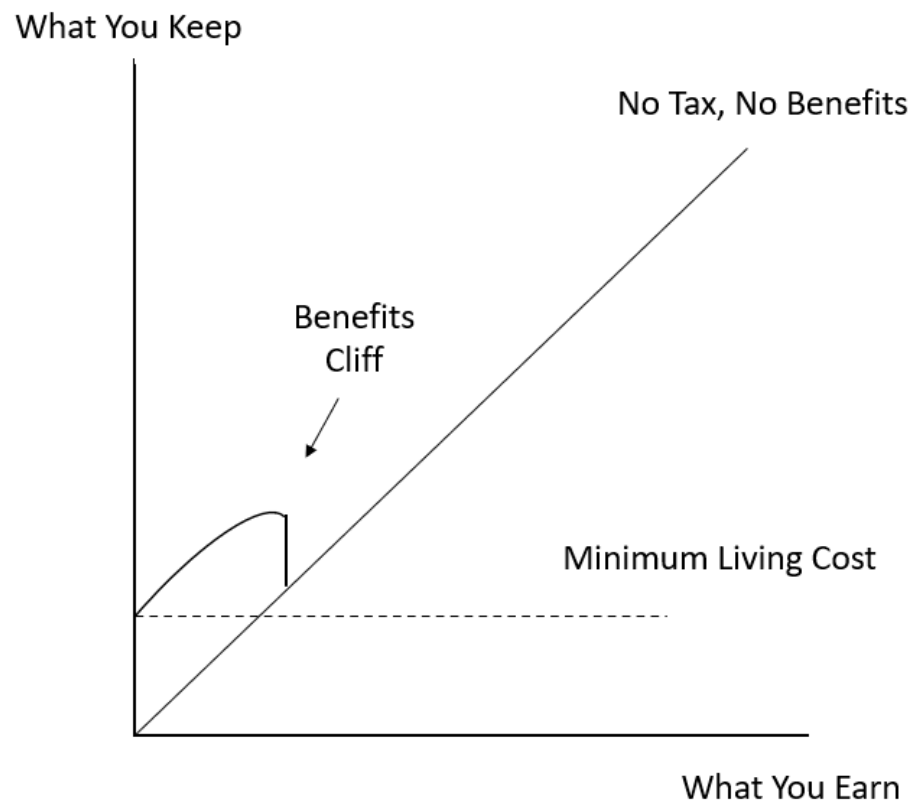
Toward a more complete understanding: the thicket of causation

- Many causes: entangled and reinforcing
- Racial injustice
 - Story of Sandtown—Gornik book, Appendix
- Predations by the non-poor
 - Payday loan industry – 391% APR
 - Landlords overcharging
- Habitually unwise decision making by the poor
 - Unhealthy habits – obesity
 - Drugs and alcohol
 - Breakup of the family
- Public policies – the \$800/week trap



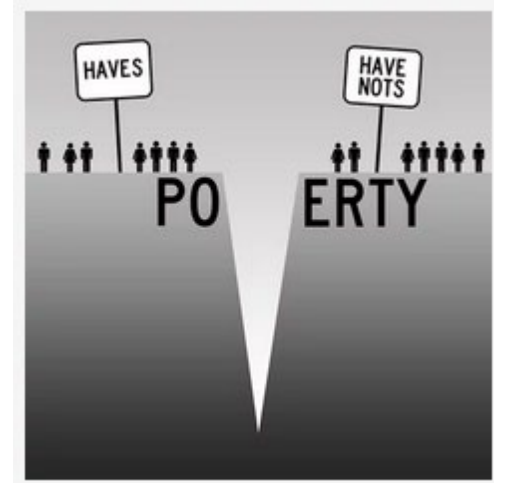
Tax and welfare policies create “\$800/week trap”

A conceptual representation



- Social Security: 12 benefits, 2728 primary rules, applied by tens of thousands of secondary rules for individual circumstances
- Pharisees: 613 laws, 248 exhortations, and 365 prohibitions for 10 Commandments

The Great Divide: a consequence of poverty



- Widening gap between haves and have-nots
 - Economic gap: poor v. non-poor
 - Moral lassitude attends both: non-poor handle better
- Weakening social structures: family breakup
 - Poor developmental outcomes - children of single parents
 - Marriage rates for lowest income quintile 26% in 2018
 - Marriage rates for top quintile 60% in 2018
- Achievement gap in children
 - Social media a large factor

Questions? Comments?

On to 3rd Big Idea:

Wellness of human soul, healing of personal identity
must accompany relief to gain economic freedom;
Practice of virtue begins the healing process

The Practice of Virtue: an insight revealed

- World Bank response, 2018
 - Multi-dimensional poverty:
 - education services
 - basic infrastructure services
 - Improvement: fails to address human brokenness
- Christian missionaries in Africa and Asia: a better insight
 - Foundational step: restoration of human soul
 - Give the poor an answer: why do their lives have meaning?
 - Find personal identity in some Truth that transcends opinion
 - Judeo-Christian answer: adopted children of God
 - Personal identity defined by Transcendent Truth – actions spring from that



Restore Personal Identity: grounded in some transcendent Truth

- Two aspects of identity: agency and benevolence
 - Agency means effectiveness, self-control, purposeful actions
 - Benevolence means good actions
- Aquinas test for good action:
 - Good goal or purpose
 - Action taken in a good manner
 - Taken with good motivation – *Soli Deo Gloria*
- Life becomes meaningful as we do good
- How can we do “good” in a sinful world?



Virtue and *Shalom*: three ethical practices help

1. Respect for others

- Second great commandment
- Universal law of reciprocity

2. Respect for self

- Not self-love, but seeking the good for others (Aristotle)
- God made you: Psalm 139:13-14

3. Conscious practice of virtue

- Seek opportunities for self-aware practice of virtue: Aristotle
- Through the Grace granted by Christ, we can walk in the good works God has planned for us. Ephesians 2:10

Questions? Comments?

Idea 4: Missional enterprises as part of the solution

Who are the Missional Entrepreneurs?

- Private organizations (NGO with 501 (c) 3 designation)
- Located in the communities they serve
- Know their clients as individuals and engage them in recovery
- Subscribe to ethical principles
 - Transcend personal opinion
 - Consistent with personal freedom and dignity
- Provide opportunities to practice the ethical habits consistent with economic freedom
- Small scale as organizations
- Organizationally complex because of external constituencies
- Many faith-based (but some not)

An Example



- Eleos Coffee <https://www.eleoscoffee.com/>
 - Religious 501 (c) 3
 - Inner-city of KCMO: crime, highest murder rate in city, drug addiction, gangs, homelessness
 - How? Operates gourmet coffee/sandwich shop
 - Mission: “While being passionate about great coffee, our vision goes much deeper. Ultimately, we desire our coffee house to be a catalyst for community transformation. We hope to see a culture of godliness and goodness among the residents of our communities that is directly traceable to an acceptance of the good news of God's love in Jesus.”
 - Founders live in the community
 - Deep knowledge, strong relationships
 - Community events
 - Food pantry/truck during pandemic

Second Example



- Ripple of One
 - Educational 501 (c) 3
 - Simi-rural upstate South Carolina
 - Mission: “We empower families to move beyond public assistance and into their full God-given potential.”
 - How? “We teach our participants life skills such as budgeting, money management, and how to exercise. We have programs that help them earn a trade or college degree and obtain a living wage. We even offer incentives for meeting goals such as paid internships and money matching.”
 - Strong values training
 - Emphasis on the family
 - Mostly broken: a Mom, 2 or 3 kids. Father(s) absent or unknown.
 - Part of an *Entrepreneurial Ecosystem* based on faith-based culture in upstate



Missionary Entrepreneurs: a Demography

	Worldview grounded in theology	Worldview grounded in humanism
Organizational form	Not-for profit religious Eleos Coffee https://www.eleoscoffee.com/ Ride to Work Ministries https://rtwministry.org/	
	Not-for profit educational aSTEAM Village www.asteamvillage.org Ripple of One https://www.rippleofone.org/	The IDEAL School: https://www.theidealschool.org/
	For profit Nehemiah Manufacturing https://www.nehemiahmfg.com/	TAG Holdings https://taghold.com/index.html
	International Peru Mission: www.perumission.org Hope International: https://www.hopeinternational.org/	Sama: https://www.sama.com/ Goodwill Industries International: https://www.goodwill.org/

In Summary:

5 operating principles distinguish *Missional Entrepreneurs*

1. Understand poverty as crisis of human soul...leading to:
 - a. Social poverty
 - b. Economic poverty
2. Healing requires moral virtue, understanding what “good” means
 - a. Judeo-Christian teachings
 - b. Aristotle or Hindu *Rta*
3. Virtue must be practiced
4. Know the poor as individuals
 - a. Not as demographic or legislated aggregates
 - b. Emphasize relationships
5. Understand social and economic context of the ‘hood
 - a. Street Smarts
 - b. Provide economic relief where it helps

Why this matters...

- Strength of government anti-poverty programs
 - National scale
 - Financial capability
- Greatest strength is also weakness
 - Enables life of acceptable dependence
 - Multi-generational poverty
- Strength of *Missional Entrepreneurs*
 - Save humanity one soul at a time
- Nation (and the world) needs more of them

Why this matters: final thoughts

- How much relief can Missional Entrepreneurs provide?
 - More than we get right now...
 - Eliminate poverty? Not a chance.
 - Then, why does it matter?
- For those who can be helped, it matters a lot.



Our duty is not to be successful; our duty is to be faithful.

- Enjoy the adventure

Nothing is done well that is not done with joy





Appendix

Material Perhaps Handy to Know

Some things to read that might help...

- Mark R. Gornik, *To Live in Peace: Biblical Faith and the Changing Inner City*, (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2002)
- Bryant L. Myers, *Walking with the Poor: Principles and Practices of Transformational Development* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2011)
- Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert, *When Helping Hurts* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2009).
- Katherine Manley, *Don't Tell Them You're Cold* (Scott Depot, West Virginia: Mountain State Press, 2019)
- J. D. Vance, *Hillbilly Elegy: a Memoir of a Family and Culture in Crisis*. (New York: HarperCollins, 2016).
- Gregory Boyle, *Tattoos on the Heart* (New York: Free Press, 2010)



Another Example

- aSTEAM Village <https://www.asteamvillage.org/>
 - Educational 501 (c) 3
 - Inner-city of KCMO not far from Eleos Coffee
 - Mission: “Inspire students and families to pursue education and career pathways in Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math (STEAM), through community-based project learning and innovative programs.”
 - How? K-12 supplementary programs in STEAM
 - Failed KCMO public schools
 - Exciting tech platforms: Robotics, aviation
 - Work in teams: cooperation, dispute resolution responsibility for outcome
 - Parental support key to motivation
 - Book of Proverbs for discipline

