

Strategic guidelines for alleviating poverty in part of the Reformed Churches of Synod Midlands: A Pastoral study

by

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Mini-dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
Degree Magister Theologiae in Pastoral Study at the University of North West
in the Potchefstroom Campus

August 2004

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Acknowledgement

I would like to thank the Almighty God who was and is still and will be with me for the rest of my life. I would like to send my sincere thanks and gratitude to my supervisors, Prof. B.J. de Klerk, and Rev. R.S. Letšosa, for their guidance and support throughout. I would like to thank all people who were eager to answer questions for the success of my empirical research (members from church of Tshiawelo, Boskop, Tlokwe-Bophirima and Diepkloof).

I wish to thank the personnel of the Theological Library Mev. Smit for her kindness in helping me in the library, how can I forget Mev. G. Van Rooyen who helped me to find some materials that I used to complete my work. I would also like to thank my parents; Nkhumeleni and Masindi Makungo, my young brothers (Philip and Elekanyani) and sisters (Jane, Zwido, and Konanani) who encouraged me till this far, and Rev. Baloyi's family who also encouraged me.

I wish to thank Thiofhi, Peter, Thina and Rev Hulisani (my Prayer partners), Synod and all my classmates. You are really a good company to me. I would like to say a special thanks to my fiancée Konanani Elsie Mamida and her family. She encouraged me throughout and was always praying for me. I would like to thank all the churches under Synod Soutpansberg, especially Malamulele Reformed Church, and all the churches under Classis Tlokwe, especially Tlokwe-Botshabela, where I served for almost four years and half as an elder. How can I forget my two grandmothers (Nyavheani and Phophi), they helped me in my previous studies.

Ntshengedzeni Robert Makungo

Table of Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	1
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION	1
A. KEY WORDS	1
B. STEUTELWOORDE	1
1.1 BACKGROUND AND PROBLEM STATEMENT	1
1.1.1 <i>Definition of poverty</i>	1
1.1.2 <i>Background</i>	3
1.1.3 <i>Background of poverty in the resort of Synod Midlands</i>	6
1.1.4 <i>Problem statement</i>	7
1.2 AIM AND OBJECTIVES	8
1.2.1 <i>Aim:</i>	8
1.2.2. <i>Objectives</i>	8
1.3 CENTRAL THEORETICAL ARGUMENT	9
1.4 METHOD OF RESEARCH	9
1.4.1 <i>Basis theory:</i>	9
1.4.2 <i>Meta-theory:</i>	10
1.4.3 <i>Empirical study:</i>	10
1.4.4 <i>Practice theory</i>	10
1.5 TENTATIVE CHAPTER DIVISION	11
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	11
CHAPTER 2: BASIS-THEORY	11
CHAPTER 3: META-THEORY	12

CHAPTER 4: EMPIRICAL STUDY	12
CHAPTER 5	12
CHAPTER 6:	12
SUMMARY AND FINAL CONCLUSION	12
1.6 SCHEMATIC PRESENTATION	12
CHAPTER 2: BASIS-THEORY ON POVERTY ALLEVIATION	15
INTRODUCTION	15
2.1 WORK-PLAN AND METHOD	15
2.2 EXEGESIS FROM OT ON POVERTY	16
2.2.1 <i>Exegesis of Leviticus 19: 9 and 10</i>	16
2.2.2 <i>Exegesis of Deuteronomy 15:4</i>	20
2.2.3 <i>Exegesis of Proverbs</i>	25
2.2.4 <i>Exegesis of Jeremiah 22:16</i>	28
2.2.5 <i>Exegesis of Ezekiel 16:49</i>	30
2.2.6 <i>Exegesis of Ezekiel 22:29</i>	31
2.3 SUMMARY OF OT	33
2.4 BASIC PRINCIPLES FROM THE OT REGARDING POVERTY	34
2.5 EXEGESIS FROM NT REGARDING POVERTY	34
2.5.1 <i>Matthew 25:31-46</i>	35
2.5.2 <i>Luke 9:14-17</i>	38
2.5.3 <i>Acts 2:42-47</i>	42
2.5.4 <i>James 2:14-17</i>	46
2.6 SUMMARY OF THE NT	49
2.7 BASIC PRINCIPLES FROM NT REGARDING POVERTY	50

2.8 GENERAL CONCEPTS FOR SERVANTS FROM THE OT AND NT	50
2.9 DIACONAL	51
2.9.1 <i>Summary of 2.9</i>	55
2.10 STEWARDSHIP	55
2.10.1 <i>Summary of 2.10</i>	59
2.11 DISCIPLESHIP	59
2.11.1 <i>Summary of 2.11</i>	62
2.11.2 <i>Summary of the deacon, steward, and disciple</i>	62
2.11.3 <i>Basis theoretical principles from general concepts for servants in the OT and NT</i>	63
2.11.4 <i>Final basis theoretical principles from the Bible</i>	64
CHAPTER 3	65
3.1 INTRODUCTION	65
3.1 WORK PLAN FOR CHAPTER 3	65
3.2 THEOLOGICAL VIEW ON POVERTY ALLEVIATION	66
3.2.1 <i>Summary of a theological view on poverty alleviation</i>	69
3.3 THE SAVED AND THEIR CALLING TO SERVE OTHERS	70
3.3.1 <i>Summary of the saved and their calling to serve others</i>	72
3.4 CALLING FOR THE CHURCH TO CARE FOR THEIR NEIGHBOURS	73
3.4.1 <i>Summary of Calling for the church to care for their neighbours</i>	76
3.5 WHAT CAN BE THE SOLUTION TO POVERTY?	76
3.5.1 <i>The church's partnership and participation with the government to alleviate poverty</i>	76
3.6 THE CHURCH AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS (NGO'S)	79
3.6.1 <i>Summary of: What can be the solution to poverty?</i>	82
• <i>There should be partnership and participation between the churches and the</i>	

<i>government to alleviate poverty</i>	82
3.6 FINAL SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 3 IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE AIM STATED IN THE INTRODUCTION OF THIS CHAPTER	82
CHAPTER 4	84
4. EMPIRICAL STUDY CONCERNING POVERTY ALLEVIATION	84
4.1 METHOD OF THE EMPIRICAL STUDY	84
4.2 WORK PLAN	86
4.3 THE QUESTIONNAIRE	87
4.4 OPEN EYE AND HEART FOR THE POOR	87
<i>4.4.1 Deduced findings</i>	90
4.5 THE ATTITUDE: LOVE AND COMPASSION	91
<i>4.5.1 Findings deduced</i>	93
4.6 THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE LEADERS OF THE CHURCH- E.G. DEACONS AND ELDERS	93
<i>4.6.1 Deduced findings</i>	96
4.7 THE CHURCH MEMBERS- ACTIVE HELP	97
<i>4.7.1 Deduced Findings</i>	98
4.8 CHURCHES HELPING ONE ANOTHER	99
<i>4.8.1 Findings deduced</i>	100
4.9 THE ATTITUDE OF THE POOR	101
<i>4.9.1 Deduced findings</i>	102
4.10 FINAL CONCLUSION ON EMPIRICAL REPORT.	102
<i>4.10.1 Positive aspects:</i>	102
<i>4.10.2 Negative aspects</i>	103
CHAPTER 5	105

***PRAXIS: PRACTICAL THEORETICAL THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE IN
ALLEVIATING POVERTY IN THE CHURCHES THAT ARE IN THE CHURCHES
THAT ARE IN THE SYNOD MIDLANDS*** **105**

5. INTRODUCTION **105**

5.2 WORK PLAN **105**

**5.3 BASIS THEORETICAL PRINCIPLES AND META THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES FROM
CHAPTER 2, 3 AND 4 AND GUIDELINES FOR A PRACTICE THEORETICAL THEORY** **106**

5.3.1 Basis theoretical principles on God and poverty **106**

5.3.2 Perspectives from the meta-theory on God and poverty **107**

5.3.3 Findings from the empirical study on God and poverty **107**

5.3.4 Guidelines for a practice theory on God and poverty **107**

*5.4.1 Basis theoretical principles on leaders of the church and the people and
poverty* **108**

5.4.2 Perspectives from the meta-theory on leaders of people and poverty **108**

5.4.3 Findings from the empirical study on leaders of people and the church poverty
109

5.4.5 Guidelines for the practice theory on leaders of the church and the poor **110**

5.5.1 Basis theoretical principles on the people and poverty **110**

5.5.2 Perspectives from the meta-theory on the people and poverty **111**

5.5.3 Findings from the empirical study on the people and poverty **111**

5.5.4 Guidelines for a practice theory on people and poverty **112**

5.6.1 Basis theoretical principles on poor and poverty **113**

5.6.2 Perspectives from the meta-theory on the poor and poverty **113**

5.6.3 Findings from the empirical study on the poor and poverty **114**

5.6.4 Guidelines for a practice theory on the poor and poverty **114**

5.7 FINAL PRACTICAL THEORETICAL GUIDELINES IN ALLEVIATING

<i>POVERTY IN THE CHURCHES THAT ARE IN THE CHURCHES THAT ARE IN THE SYNOD MIDLANDS</i>	<i>115</i>
CHAPTER 6	116
6.1 INTRODUCTION	116
6.2 WORK PLAN OF THE STUDY	116
6.3 THE FOLLOWING CONCLUSIONS WERE ACHIEVED IN CHAPTER 2 ON BASIS THEORETICAL PRINCIPLES:	117
6.4 IN CHAPTERS 3 AND 4 META THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES WERE DONE WITH THE HELP OF LITERATURE STUDY AND EMPIRICAL RESEARCH.	118
<i>6.4.1 The following perspectives were reached in chapter 3:</i>	<i>118</i>
<i>6.4.2 The following findings were reached in chapter 4:</i>	<i>118</i>
6.5 IN CHAPTER 5 PRACTICE THEORETICAL GUIDELINES WERE GIVEN ON ALLEVIATING POVERTY IN THE CHURCHES THAT ARE IN THE SYNOD MIDLANDS:	120
6.6 FINAL CONCLUSION	121
6.7 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY	121
ABSTRACT	123
6.8 BIBLIOGRAPHY	127

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Title: Strategic guidelines for alleviating poverty in part of the Reformed Churches of Synod Midlands: A Pastoral study

I will concentrate on the three churches: Reformed Church Tshiawelo, Reformed Church Tlokwe-Bophirima, and Reformed Church Boskop

A. Key Words

Poverty, alleviation, poor, stewardship, and discipleship

B. Steutelwoorde

Armoede, verligting, armoedig, rentmeesterskap, dissipelskap

1.1 Background and problem statement

1.1.1 Definition of poverty

Poverty is a complex concept, which has been defined by different people in different ways. Shabangu (2000:14) defines poverty as lack of basic requirements to sustain a physically healthy existence that includes food and shelter. Poverty can be defined as the result of a lack of things, that is, poor

people are those who *inter alia* do not have enough to eat, a place to sleep, or clean water. This means that poverty is when a person lacks the basics needed for survival. Mohapi (2002:70) says that poor people may not understand nutrition, the need to boil water, the importance of child spacing or how to read instructions on a packet of improved seeds. They do not know about suitable agriculture, running small businesses and the importance of saving money.

Yi (2002:7) defines poverty as alienation from the community, food insecurity, crowded houses, lack of basic forms of energy, lack of job security, and fragmentation of the family. He also says that poverty is concerned with the absolute standard of living of the poor, who are not able to attain a minimum standard of living. Van Deventer (1997:4) defines poverty as a theological-anthropological problem, and he said that poverty could be defined as having direct association with the power of sin, which has affected and distorted the total corruption "*corruptio totalis*" (Van Deventer, 1997:8). According to him, people were created in the image of God "*imago Dei*", with the purpose of living in the right relation and relationship to God, to himself/herself, toward others and towards creation (Gen 1:26-31).

According to Van Deventer poverty is one of the symptoms of the "*corruptio totalis*". The concept of poverty should be explained in its widest sense and that association with the "*corruptio totalis*" should be maintained.

A proposed definition of poverty can read as "lack of basic needs like food, clothes, shelter, clean water, and better education". Most poor people are found in townships and in rural areas. They live in shacks, they don't have a good diet,

and they have no warm clothes. Their condition is not conducive for a human being to have a better life, because they lack the basic needs for survival. Most of the churches that are in the resort of Synod Midlands are in the poverty stricken areas. What should be done to help in solving the problem of poverty inside and outside the churches? The lives of people who are in this kind of situation need to be improved.

1.1.2 Background

In the Imbizo Focus Week (2002), Mbeki reports that he visited places and projects in Gauteng Province to view progress regarding poverty alleviation, economic growth, and delivery of basic services and improvement in the conditions under which people live. He listened to ideas on how people and the government can work together to accelerate implementation of relevant programs. In other words, President Mbeki was on a campaign to find better ways to help to alleviate poverty. "Imbizo" is an opportunity for people to hear directly from government about what it is doing to implement its program of action. This kind of information is essential for holding the government accountable. "Imbizo" is a program that focuses on improving the lives of people. It is an opportunity for people to speak out and for government to listen and learn about how the government and the communities can work together better to implement programs and overcome problems in starting projects. Granted such an opportunity, little or nothing has been heard from the side of the churches, not to mention those in the resort of Synod Midlands. This study will mainly focus on this issue.

Findings of the National Project on Poverty and Inequality, which was held in 1998 (<http://www.polity.org.za/html/govdocs/pr/2002/pr1003a.html>), highlighted the enormous challenge for poverty alleviation in South Africa, both on the short and long term. South Africa is classed as an upper middle-income country, but it is evident that most South African households experience outright poverty or are vulnerable to being poor. Poverty becomes a burden for all citizens, including those who are members of the church. Although the core of South Africa's poverty problems occur in rural areas, poverty has also emerged as a significant feature of city environments as a result of urbanisation.

Pieterse (2000:3) says that there is one enormous problem that makes it impossible for most people in South Africa to achieve and enjoy a good life. The obstacle in South Africa is the problem of poverty. Why can poverty not easily be combatted? The problem may easily be due to the fact that the church does not play its role of proclaiming the Gospel properly. This means that the Gospel itself must be made practical in the real situation of the believers. Love should be exercised in a practical manner by providing for the needs of the people (contextualization). Christ set a good example when He provided food to a group of five thousand men, not counting women (Luke 9:10-17). Christ did not only preach, but He also provided food for the people's physical needs.

It is evident that the government is making the issue of poverty its focus. Can the same be said about the church and about Christians? If one looks at the matter from the side of the advantaged, Botes (2002:11) argues that there are few white people who dare go into townships. The few that do go become astonished at the poverty, the simplicity and the need, but also at the friendliness and hospitality of

township people. The problems that arise in the minds of these people are the involvement of the Christians in dealing with poverty. The few whites that go are determined to help in the betterment of the situation in the traumatised black and coloured communities. Many other whites who are still caught in the thinking of the old system are astonished by the situation caused by Apartheid. One can say that they still fear that blacks can retaliate and fight them when they see them in their townships. Christians must have the guts to enter such townships and to find ways to fight poverty. Christians, irrespective of colour, gender and race should be able to get into the real situation of poverty, in order to identify the needs of people who are directly affected.

Christians are working; some of the churches are involved, but how far? It is evident that the Church has not raised its voice high enough.

Taylor (2000:32-33) says that the fact that God does not deal with us according to what we deserve but according to His love, does not compromise His desire and demand for justice for the innocent sufferer in the least, for the weak and the oppressed. God's love must be manifested to the world by acts of love to other people. Those who need help should get it from Christians who received God's love when He accepted them through His Son Jesus Christ. Taylor also said that God seeks justice for the poor simply because God loves them. It is a gratuitous love, free of any explanation, unconstrained by reason or logic, including the logic of retribution for the wicked or reward for the innocent or more deserving. God's love should be practical amongst His children (James 2:14-17). Church mission should not only focus on the preaching of the gospel, it is of vital importance to look at the different spheres in people's lives when the churches

can involve themselves in alleviating poverty.

1.1.3 Background of poverty in the resort of Synod Midlands

The researcher is a student at the North-West University, Potchefstroom Campus. The researcher has been a member of Tlokwe-Botshabela Congregation, which falls under Tlokwe Classis in the Synod Midlands. For five years the researcher has been serving as an elder in one of the wards in a farm area in Klipdrift. Sometimes he preached in some of the churches around Potchefstroom while doing practical work. In Classis meetings he realised that there is poverty is really problematic in the churches that fall under Classis Tlokwe and in most, if not in all, the churches in Synod Midlands.

Van Deventer (1997:1) said that when they moved to Venda in 1982, they saw the poor and their related problems, and it really touched his heart and mind. The more he got involved in the work, the more relationships between the congregation and Rev. Van Deventer grew. He became deeply engrossed in the daily lives of the people he was serving. There came an awareness of the importance of in-depth participation and observation, with the aim of better knowledge of the situation of the group he was serving.

Van Deventer (1997:3) argues that his humble contribution might form part of the chain of efforts to understand the Biblical and theological responsibility of the church towards the poor. There is still poverty in the churches today, both outside and inside the church. Therefore, the church cannot just sit and relax whilst the problem persists. If the church does not become involved in solving the problem,

the church will remain poor. How can these churches become involved in alleviating poverty? Little is heard about the involvement of Synod Midlands with regard to poverty eradication or alleviation. The situation of how the Synod Midlands can involve themselves in the alleviation of poverty in and outside the church, needs investigation.

If churches in the Synod Midlands do not find ways to fight or alleviate poverty, it will affect the churches and the community at large. People outside and inside the church will suffer because of poverty. God, who does not want us to starve, wants us to use the knowledge He granted us to alleviate poverty. In the churches of Synod Midlands, ministers who cannot tolerate the situation have started to look for jobs in the army or have become civil servants in prisons and in the police force. What will the future of the churches and the community at large be if poverty is not eradicated or alleviated? Church ministers have the responsibility to teach people how they can fight poverty. If ministers seriously preach the truth about God concerning poverty, they may contribute a lot in its alleviation, especially in the churches.

1.1.4 Problem statement

The main problem statement of this study is: What pastoral and strategic guidelines can be given to Reformed churches in Synod Midlands regarding the problem of poverty alleviation?

In answering this question, the study will try to answer the following guiding questions:

- 1.4.1 What are Scriptural perspectives on poverty and the churches' responsibility towards alleviating poverty?
- 1.4.2 What is the character of poverty in the region of the Reformed churches in Synod Midlands?
- 1.4.3 What pastoral and strategic guidelines can be given to churches in Synod Midlands to become involved in fighting poverty or alleviating poverty?

1.2 *Aim and Objectives*

1.2.1 Aim:

The aim of this study is provide Biblical strategic guidelines to alleviate poverty, especially in the resort of Synod Midlands.

1.2.2. Objectives

- 1.2.2.1 To find out what the Bible says about poverty and the responsibility of the church towards poverty alleviation.
- 1.2.2.2 To determine the character of poverty in the region of the Reformed churches in Synod Midlands
- 1.2.2.3 To find pastoral and strategic guidelines for the churches in Synod Midlands with regard to how they can involve themselves in alleviating poverty.

1.3 Central theoretical argument

The central theoretical argument of this study is that Scriptural practical and strategic guidelines will help the Reformed churches in Synod Midlands to become involved in fighting poverty.

1.4 Method of research

The model that deals with the basis-theory, meta-theory and praxis-theory as defined for Practical theology by Zeffass, will be used in this regard (Heyns & Pieterse, 1990:35-36).

1.4.1 Basis theory:

In order to determine the character of poverty, an exegetical study of poverty from the Old Testament and the New Testament is required. In the Old Testament exegesis will be done in Genesis 3:17, 19; Deuteronomy 15:4; Lev. 19:10; Jeremiah 22:16 and Proverbs 22:9, Proverbs 6:9-11, Ezekiel 16:49, Ezekiel 22:29. In the New Testament exegesis will be done in Matthew 25:31-46; Luke 9:10-17; Acts 2:42-47; James 2:14-17, and Paul's view on poverty. In addition to the focus on the OT and the NT, attention will also be paid to the origins of the office of deacons, stewardship and discipleship in the NT. The formation of basis-theory on poverty alleviation will be determined according to the grammatical-historical exegetical method (cf. Coetzee, 1997). In analysing the Old Testament, words analysis of Semantic domain will be done according to

the model of Van Gemenen 1997. Word analysis of semantic domain in the New Testament will be done according to the model of Louw and Nida 1989.

1.4.2 Meta-theory:

In order to achieve the first objective, a literature study with a focus on sociology will be done. This study will concentrate on means to alleviate poverty.

1.4.3 Empirical study:

Qualitative interviews will be held in the farm areas as well as in the townships, or what one can call black locations. Ministers, church elders, deacons and church members from three churches will be interviewed in this regard. In each local congregation a minister, elder, deacon and two ordinary church members of different genders will be interviewed.

1.4.4 Practice theory

The practical-theoretical method will be an interaction between basis-theory and meta-theory. In this practical study strategic guidelines will be formulated on how Synod Midlands can become involved in the actions to fight poverty or in alleviating poverty.

1.5 Tentative Chapter Division

Chapters in this study will be as follows:

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and problem statement

1.1.1 Definition of poverty

1.1.2 Background

1.1.3 Background of poverty in the resort of Synod Midlands

1.1.4 Problem statement

1.1 Aim and objectives

1.1.1 Aim

1.1.2 Objectives

1.2 Actuality of the Study

1.3 Central theoretical argument

1.4 Method of research

1.4.1 Basis theory

1.4.2 Meta theory

1.4.3 Empirical Study

1.4.4 Practice theory

1.5 Tentative chapter division

1.6 Schematic presentation

1.7 Bibliography

CHAPTER 2: BASIS-THEORY

- 2.1 Basis-theory on poverty alleviation**
- 2.2 Old Testament perspectives on poverty**
- 2.3 Study in New Testament perspectives on poverty**
- 2.4 Summary**

CHAPTER 3: META-THEORY

CHAPTER 4: EMPIRICAL STUDY

CHAPTER 5

Praxis: practical theoretical theological perspective in alleviating poverty in the churches that are in the churches that are in the synod midlands

CHAPTER 6:

SUMMARY AND FINAL CONCLUSION

1.6 Schematic presentation

Problem Statement	Aim/Objectives	Methodology
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What practical theological and strategic guidelines can be provided to Reformed churches in Synod Midlands with regard to the problem of alleviating poverty?	The aim of this study is to come up with Biblical strategic guidelines to help alleviate poverty, especially in the resort of Synod Midlands.	The model that deals with the basis-theory, meta-theory and praxis-theory as defined for Practical theology by Zerfass, will be used in this regard.
What does the Bible say about poverty and the churches' responsibility towards alleviating poverty?	The objective is to find out what the Bible says about poverty and the responsibility of the church towards alleviating poverty.	In order to determine the character of poverty, exegesis in the Old Testament and the New Testament will be done.
What is the character of poverty in the region in and in the Reformed churches in Synod Midlands?	The objective is to determine the character of poverty in the region and in the Reformed churches in Synod Midlands.	In order to achieve the first objective a literature study, with the focus sociology will be done. This study will concentrate on means to alleviate poverty. Qualitative interviews, with the aid of questionnaires, will be held in the farm areas as well as in the townships

What practical strategic guidelines can be given to churches in Synod Midlands to become involved in fighting poverty or alleviating poverty?	The objective is to find a practical strategic guideline to churches in Synod Midlands with regard to how they can involve themselves in alleviating poverty.	The practical-theoretical method will be an interaction between basis-theory and meta-theory.
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CHAPTER 2: BASIS-THEORY ON POVERTY ALLEVIATION

INTRODUCTION

2.1 Work-plan and method

The approach to this study will be an exegetical analysis of the following Scriptural portions from the OT: Leviticus 19: 9 and 10; Deuteronomy 15:4; Proverbs 22:9; Proverbs 6:9-11, Jeremiah 22:16; Ezekiel 16:49, Ezekiel 22:29; and the following from the NT: Matthew 25:31-46; Luke 9:14-17; Acts 2:42-47; and James 2:14-17, and Paul's view on poverty. First, an introduction will be given. The introduction will be followed by the exegesis of the OT, and then by the exegesis of the NT. The intention is to determine the basic Biblical principles with regard to poverty. After the study of the OT, basic principles will be determined. The same will apply after the study of the NT. Before the summary, the basic principles with regard to poverty from both the OT and the NT will be brought together. In addition to the focus on the OT and the NT, attention will also be paid on the origins of the office of deacons, stewardship and discipleship in the NT. This has to do with poverty because in the New Testament deacons assisted in meeting the needs of the people. The emphasis on the deacon as an office includes that they must not only help in the church, but they must also help outside the church. According to Vorster (2003:45), the essence of the office of deacon is to collect the money and goods given to the poor as gifts of love conscientiously, and to distribute the gifts diligently after joint deliberation according to the needs of both the needy and other church members. Vorster (1999:47) says that it is their duty to visit and comfort those in need and ensure

that the gifts are not abused.

2.2 Exegesis from OT on poverty

2.2.1 Exegesis of Leviticus 19: 9 and 10

The poor are defined as being the afflicted, oppressed, poverty stricken people. This pertains to a lowly, needy state. It was often a class of persons of low status in a society, usually of persons in fiscal (financial, economic, or monetary) poverty, implying a lack of resources. Ex 22:22-24, says, "Do not take advantage of a widow or an orphan. ²³ If you do and they cry out to me, I will certainly hear their cry. ²⁴ My anger will be aroused, and I will kill you with the sword; your wives will become widows and your children fatherless^{1a}. Lev. 19:9-10 shows us that God is concerned about the needs of the poor. He was God, and is still the same God, and will remain God forever. Therefore, His people should not be grasping, they should not make every cent their own. They must share with the needy, they must share what God in His mercy have granted them (Butrick, et al., 1953:96-97).

The Hebrew law code is noted for its fairness and social responsibility toward the poor. God insisted that the poor and powerless be well treated and given the chance to restore their fortunes. They were to reflect God's concern for the poor by helping those less fortunate than themselves. Yahweh's relationship towards the poor is therefore determined by the covenant, and it is within this framework of the covenant that God's people are called to responsibility towards the poor (Van de Venter, 1997:95).

¹The New International Version, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House) 1984.

Various laws for the protection of the underprivileged were included because God cares for them (God says, “I am compassionate”, v. 27). This indicates God’s love towards the underprivileged, those who have needs that should be reached by those blessed by God. God is not only compassionate to the poor, but also to foreigners, they were to be treated benevolently because the Israelites themselves had been aliens in Egypt (v. 21; cf. Exodus 23:9). Also, they were not to take advantage of people without fathers or husbands, because they were already without protection (Ex. 22:22-24). Mistreatment of such people would arouse God’s anger and the guilty parties would lose their lives.

Grain was to be left behind for widows and orphans during harvest (Deut. 24:19-21) including the edges of fields (Lev. 19:9-10). The helpers were to be given special hospitality at feasts (Deut. 16:11-14), to receive a special tithe every third year (Deut. 14:28-29; 16:12-13), and to be allowed to plant crops in others’ fields during the sabbatical year (Ex. 23:11-12).

Also, for Israelites in financial need, loans were to be interest-free (22:25-27; cf. Lev. 25:35-38; Deut. 15:7-11; 23:19-20). If a loan was made to a poor person, some valuable possession, usually a cloak was given to the creditor as a pledge of repayment. His cloak had to be returned to him by sunset to give him comfort at night (cf. Deut. 24:10-13; Job 22:6). In Leviticus the Israelites were given laws to follow, and God instructed or commanded them that they should leave the gleanings of their harvest and vintage for the poor, Leviticus 19:9, 10. Works of piety must always be attended by works of charity, according to our ability. When the Jews gathered their corn, they were to leave some crops behind, in the

corner of the field. The Jewish doctors say, "It should be a sixtieth part of the field;" and they must also leave the gleanings and the small clusters of their grapes that were overlooked. This law, though not binding, teaches us the following:

1. That we must not be covetous, griping, and greedy of everything we can lay any claim to; nor insist upon our right in things small and trivial.
2. That we must be well pleased to see the poor supplied and refreshed with the fruit of our labours. We must not think everything lost that goes beside ourselves, nor anything wasted that goes to the poor.
3. That times of joy, such as harvest-time, are proper times for charity; that, when we rejoice, the poor may rejoice with us, and when our hearts are blessing God, their loins may bless us (Matthew, 1997).

Knight (1981:118) says that the 'holy family' of Israel had to show forth God's holy, rescuing love, by showing love to the weaker and poorer members of the community, as well as to any foreigners who happen to be staying in the Holy Land. Why should such people experience either fear or hunger in the Holy Land? God commanded His people to care for the foreigners living in their country. Leviticus 19:9 and 10, reveals this truth to all Israelites. They were supposed to do the loving deeds, rather than just talking. They were to do all these things in all spheres of their lives. The question of whether verse 10 is applicable to the situation of the people in the 21st century would not hold water. The issue in this context is not farming, but rather giving from one's harvest in thanks to what God has done for us. This would then imply that in all spheres in which we experience the blessing of the Lord, we have to be thankful to him.

Knight (1981:118) further asks the question of how we must do these things in this modern money-orientated capitalistic society in which we are living now, that is, how can we help the poor and foreigners? It is clear in Lev. 19:10, which says: "You are not to strip your harvest field bare in a bad temper". It is clear that the Israelites had to help all people God commanded them to. They had to share with the needy whatever they harvest in their fields. It was a command from God, not an option. It was the law, which was familiar to the Israelites. There was no excuse of not doing it, because God knew that there would be poor people and foreigners among the Israelites.

2.2.1.1 Summary of Leviticus 19:9-10

It is clear in the book of Leviticus that people are commanded that they must not be covetous, griping, and greedy of every thing they can lay any claim to; nor insist upon their right in things small and trivial. That one must be well pleased to see the poor supplied and refreshed with the fruit of his or her labours. People must not think every thing lost that goes beside them, nor any thing wasted that goes to the poor. And that times of joy, such as harvest-time, are proper times for charity; that, when people rejoice, the poor may rejoice with them, and when their hearts are blessing God, their loins may bless them. People must think of those who are in need during the time of harvesting. They must think of sharing what they have from their fields with those who have needs. It is clear in Leviticus that people were to share their harvest with the needy. God of love commanded His people to have compassion to other people who have needs or basic needs like food. They were not to opt for what suit them best, but they were to do that out of love, honouring God by giving what they have to the needy.

2.2.2 Exegesis of Deuteronomy 15:4

God gave the Israelites the right laws for proper worship. This part starts from Deuteronomy 12:1-16:17. This part forms the second theme in the book of Deuteronomy that is about principles for Godly living: Moses' second address. The structure of the book of Deuteronomy starts with the following headings and sub-headings:

A. What God has done for His people: Moses' first address (1:1-4:43)

B. Principles for Godly living: Moses' second address (4:44-28:68)

1. Ten Commandments,
2. Love the Lord your God
3. Laws for proper worship
4. Laws for ruling the nation
5. Laws for human relationships
6. Consequences of obedience and disobedience.

C. A call for commitment to God: Moses Third Address (29:1-30:20)

D. The change in Leadership (31:1-34:12)

Obedying God's laws brought blessings to the Israelites and disobedience brought misfortune. This was part of the written agreement God made with His people. Although one can say in the context, time and place of these chapters one is not part of this covenant, the principle holds true: obedience and disobedience carry inevitable consequences in this life and the next. God reviewed his laws for the people. The legal contract between God and His people had to be renewed by the new generation about to enter the Promised Land. Deuteronomy 15:4 forms part of the third part in this book, and it is about the Laws of proper worship, and the sub-theme is about the "The Year of Canceling debts (Anon, 1991:302).

The context itself is the year of cancellation of debts, which is said to be the seventh year. The way in which it should be done is stated. Every creditor was to cancel the loan he has made to his fellow Israelite. He shall not require payment from his fellow Israelite or brother, because the Lord's time for cancelling debts has been proclaimed.

Deut. 15:4 says that to the end there shall be no poor among you, this was to prevent any Israelite from falling into extreme poverty: so the margin reads (v. 4), *To the end there shall be no poor among you*, none miserably and scandalously poor, to the reproach of their nation and religion, the reputation of which they ought to preserve. God's security is here given by a divine promise that, whatever they lost by their poor debtors, it should be made up to them in the blessing of God upon all they had and did, (Deut. 15:4-6). Let them take care to do their duty, and then God would bless them with such great increase that what they might lose by bad debts, if they generously remitted them, should not be missed out of their stock at the year's end. Blessings were promised to the Israelites when they make sure that poor people are cared for in the land that God gave them.

There will be no excuse to all who have, because God gave other people in abundance so that they can serve the demands of the poor who are around them. Their abundance should be the supply of their wants, that at least there might not be such an inequality as is between two extremes. Those who have enough must also bear in mind that even the land was God's gift to them that all their increase was the fruit of God's blessing upon them, and therefore they were bound in duty to him to use and dispose of their estates as He should order and direct them.

If they would remit what little sums they had lent to their poor brethren, it is promised that they should be able to lend great sums to their rich neighbours, *even to many nations* (v. 6), and should be enriched by those loans. Thus the nations should become subject to them, and dependent on them, as *the borrower*

is servant to the lender, Prov. 22:7. They must look on the ability to lend, and not to have to need to borrow, a great mercy, and a good reason why they should do good with what they have, lest they provoke God to turn the scales.

The law that God gave to His people was in favour of the poor borrower. It is taken for granted that there would be poor among them, who would have occasion to borrow, and that there would never cease to be some such objects of charity. "*The poor shall never cease out of thy land*", though not such as were reduced to extreme poverty, yet such as would be behind, and would have occasion to borrow; so that a charitable disposition may soon find a charitable occasion.

According to Van Deventer (1997:94) Deuteronomy 15:11 states that there will always be poor people in the land because of the attitude of both the poor and the rich people towards God and His covenant, resulting in an ever-growing problem of poverty. The disobedience of the rich towards God and His covenant results in a lack of responsibility and care towards others and therefore either assists in the creation of poverty or in the increase of an already existing problem. The disobedience of the poor towards God and His covenant could result in laziness (Proverbs 6:9-11).

In such a case they are here commanded to lend or give, according to their ability and the necessity of the case: *Thou shalt not harden thy heart, nor shut thy hand*, v. 7. If the hand be shut, it is a sign the heart is hardened; for, *if the clouds were full of rain, they would empty themselves*, Eccl. 11:3. Bowls of compassion would produce liberal distributions. Thou shalt not only stretch out

thy hand to him to reach him something, but thou shalt *open thy hand wide unto him*, to *lend him sufficient*, v. 8. Meaning the poor should be given enough by those who have.

Sometimes there is as much charity in prudent or practical lending as in giving, as it obliges the borrower to industry and honesty and may put him into a way of helping himself. People are sometimes tempted to think, when an object of charity presents him/herself, they may choose whether they will give anything or nothing, little or much; whereas it is here an express precept or a rule or decree (v. 11), *I command thee*, not only to give, but to *open thy hand wide*, to give liberally. Here is a warning against that objection which might arise against charitable lending from the foregoing law for the release of debts (v. 9): *Beware that there be not a thought*, a covetous ill-natured thought, *in thy Belial heart*, "*The year of release is at hand*, and therefore I will not lend what I must then be sure to lose;" lest thy poor brother, whom thou refusest to lend to, complain to God, and it will be a sin, a great sin, to thee.

1. The law is spiritual and lays a restraint upon the thoughts of the heart. It was a mistake if they had in mind that thoughts were free from the divine cognisance and check.
2. It is a wicked heart indeed that raises evil thoughts from the good law of God, as theirs did. Because God had obliged them to the charity of forgiving, they denied the charity of giving.
3. They were to watch carefully against all those secret suggestions that would divert them from their duty or discourage them in it. Those that would keep from the act of sin must keep out of their minds the very

thought of sin.

4. When they have an occasion for charitable lending, if they cannot trust the borrower, they were to trust God, and lend, hoping for nothing again in this world, but expecting God Himself to recompense it.
5. It is a dreadful thing to hear the cry of the poor, for God has his ear open to that cry, and, in compassion to them, will be sure to reckon with those that deal hardly with them.

God is the suffering of people, and commanded His children to care for each other in their lives. They were not to look down at people suffering from poverty. God even promised to bless His people who open their hands wide to help the poor. It was very important, because it was a command from God to His children. They were to live by these laws all the time, to please their God who helped them throughout their lives.

2.2.2.1 Summary of Deuteronomy

The law of God is spiritual and lays a restraint upon the thoughts of the heart. It was a mistake if the Israelites had thoughts that were free from the divine cognisance and check. They were to watch carefully against all those secret suggestions that would divert them from their duty or discourage them in it. Those that would keep from the act of sin must keep out of their minds the very thought of sin.

2.2.3 Exegesis of Proverbs

2.2.3.1 Proverbs 22:9

A generous man is, literally, "a good eye." (In 23:6 and 28:22 "a stingy man" is,

lit., “an evil eye.”) Willingness to share food with the poor (Id, “feeble, weak, helpless”) shows that a person is genuine; he looks at others with the desire to help them, not to take advantage of them (cf. generosity to the poor in Deut. 15:10; Prov. 14:21, 31; 28:27) (Walvoord & Zuck, 1985). One can say that figurative language was used in the book of Proverbs. A generous man is said to be a good eye. Proverbs 22:9 says. “⁹He that hath a bountiful eye shall be blessed; for he giveth of his bread to the poor. ²” The phrase ‘the eye of the Lord is on those who fear Him’ is indicative of God’s watchful care. A bountiful eye shall be blessed, that a generous man shall be blessed, in other words a generous man who cares for those who are in need, will be blessed by God (The New Bible Dictionary, 1962).

Another figurative use of the eye is a ‘stingy man’ is an ‘evil eye’. Meaning, a man who does not want to help others, is stingy, one who does not want to give bread to the poor. He does not have a watchful care for the poor; he does not provide or meet the demands for the poor. That is, a stingy man is an egocentric man, a man who thinks only for himself, and he is self-centred. God spoke out against stingy men in the nation of Israel. They were to live in accordance to His laws and commands; they were to help the poor people by giving them what they need.

2.2.3.2 Summary of Proverbs 22:9

In the book of Proverbs God wanted His people to share what they have with those who do not have. Man was not be stingy, but he was supposed to have a good eye and look after the needy. God was against self-centred persons, as He

wanted people to share what they have with those who do not have. They were to meet the demands of the needy people to show the true love of God. They were to live in accordance to His laws and commands; they were to help the poor people by giving them what they need.

2.2.3.2 Proverbs 6:9-11

By two questions (v. 9) Solomon urged the sluggard to get out of bed and start working. Verses 10-11, repeated later in 24:33-34, point out the danger of a person continuing to nap when he ought to be working: poverty will come on him suddenly in the same way a robber or an armed man (a soldier) quickly attacks an unsuspecting victim. Poverty is mentioned frequently in Proverbs (6:11; 10:15; 11:24; 13:18; 14:23; 21:5; 22:16; 24:34; 28:19, 22; 30:8; 31:7). With his time squandered, the lazy person cannot rectify his situation and has little or no money to meet his needs. Obviously such a person is unwise.

These verses, i.e. Proverbs 10:15-16, are together because they both discuss wealth. The first line of verse 15 is repeated in 18:11. Though wealth should not be placed above honour (28:20), and should not be trusted in (11:4; 23:5), it can provide a hedge against some disasters. Poverty is a continually suppressive problem to the poor (cf. 14:20; 18:23; 19:7; 22:7). The Hebrew word here for poor is "דָּאֵל" "feeble, weak, helpless," translated "poor" or "helpless" in 19:4, 17; 21:13; 22:16; 28:3, 8, 11, 15; 29:7, 14. Proverbs also uses several other words for "poor" and "poverty."

As the writer of these verses reflected on what he observed, he saw the lesson:

indolence - staying in bed and resting when it is time to work, leads to poverty (see comments on 6:11). With no crops to harvest, a lazy person has nothing to eat and nothing to sell to others for an income. Suddenly he awakens to the reality of the plight; poverty comes on him as a surprise, like a bandit or like an attacking soldier. Interestingly, the 30 sayings begin with a reference to the poor (22:22; Id meaning, "feeble, weak, helpless"). To take advantage of poor people is like sinning against God (cf. 17:5) since God is the Maker of all people (cf. Job 31:13, 15) and because He defends the cause of the poor (Prov. 22:22-23). The righteous, wise person is kind to the poor (14:21; 19:17; 28:27) for this honours God.

2.2.3.1 Summary of Proverbs

God reveals Himself as the one who defends the cause of the poor. For a man to be called righteous, he was to be kind to the poor because that honours God. In other words, they did good things for the poor, not to be glorified the people, but with the purpose of honouring God. At the end of the day the poor people who received help from other people experience God's love, who provides for the needs of the poor. Helping the poor people honours God, this implies that if people failed in providing to the needy, they were dishonouring God. This means that they were disobeying God's commands that He gave to His children to obey.

2.2.4 Exegesis of Jeremiah 22:16

Jeremiah contrasted Jehoiakim with his father, King Josiah. Josiah did what was right and just and defended the poor and needy. He lived simply and justly,

showing an interest in the cause of the poor and the needy, that is, he did not ignore them. Thus he had true knowledge of God, which to the prophet was primarily a moral rather than an intellectual matter (Butrick, et al. 1956:982-983). These were actions God expected of the king. As God's shepherd he was expected to nurture the flock, not decimate or ruin and destroy it. However, Jehoiakim inherited none of his father's godly traits. He cared only for dishonest gain, bloodshed, oppression, and extortion (Walvoord & Zuck, 1985). In Jeremiah God reveals Himself as God of true love and who want justice for the poor. He did not want them to be oppressed and exploited. He wanted even the king to take care of the poor. The kings of Israel had to protect the poor as a command from the Almighty.

Josiah had done what is right and just to the poor and needy, and he protected them. Johoiakim did not nurture the flock as his father did. He did care for dishonest gain; he shed blood and oppressed people. This was against the command of God who loves it when all the people are treated in a good manner. Leaders and kings had look after people who had needs for survival and they had to be protected. God want the kings and leaders to have compassion on the poor. Oppressing them is a sin before the eyes of God, because it is against His commands. It is against the Greatest Commandment of love to God and to other people. God expected the Israelites and their kings to honour this command by taking care of the needy or the poor people, including orphans and widows. Yahweh's relationship towards the rich and the poor is thus not determined by their condition of wealth and poverty, but by His covenant righteousness and their attitude towards Him and the covenant as religion, laws, liturgy, festivals, and other cultic and communal activities that form part of the covenant

relationship (1 Sam. 2:7-8) (Van Deventer, 1997:95).

2.2.4.1 Summary of Jeremiah 22:16

It is clear in this verse that God expected leaders to look after his people. Kings were also given the responsibility to look after those who have needs, like the poor, orphans and widows. His responsibility was to rule the nation, but also to deal with some specific issues, like helping those who have needs. Josiah defended the cause of the poor people during the time of his reign. Leaders and kings had to look after the poor, and they not only had to help them, but also to protect them.

Kings cared for orphans and widows as a symbol of love in the absence of their loved ones who passed away. It was the duty of the king and the nation to see to it that orphans and widows are treated well, and they also had full rights.

2.2.5 Exegesis of Ezekiel 16:49

The prophets were also used by God to remind people who are rich to share with others who were suffering. It was the responsibility of the people of God to look after widows and orphans. The prophet Ezekiel reminded Judah that Sodom was destroyed because its people were arrogant, overfed, and not concerned about the needy people amongst them. This verse reveals to us that sin is not only adultery, homosexuality, stealing, and murder. In this verse it is clear that Ezekiel tells his people about other sins that man can commit: arrogance, gluttony, and indifference to the needy. God forbids these sins, although those others may

seem shocking when we hear about them (cf. Alexander, 1976:55; Anon, 1991:1421).

Sodom's sin was her haughty (self-important) unconcern for the needs of others in spite of her wealth. The Sodomites did detestable things before God. This could refer to their deviate sexual aberrations or deviation (cf. Gen. 19:4-5). The sin of Samaria, though not specifically stated, was her idolatry. Jerusalem's sins were so vile (evil) that, in comparison, the sins of both Sodom and Samaria seemed almost like righteous deeds (Walvoord & Zuck, 1985). Sodom was very rich, but they did not take care for the needs of other people. Jews, as children of God, had to show sympathy to the people who have needs by supplying them in the basic needs for life.

2.2.5.1 Summary of Ezekiel 16:49

God used prophets to remind rich people to look after the poor. Prophets were also used by God to remind people who were rich to share their possessions with others who were suffering. It was the responsibility of the people of God to look after widows and orphans. The prophet Ezekiel reminded Judah that Sodom was destroyed because its people were arrogant, overfed, and not concerned about the needy people amongst them. God expected of these people who were given the message to respond by giving to the needy, orphans, poor and the widows.

2.2.6 Exegesis of Ezekiel 22:29

The prophets should have been God's spokesmen and denounced these wicked

deeds; but (except for men like Ezekiel and Jeremiah) the prophets ignored those sins and gave the people false visions and lying divinations. They claimed to be speaking for God when the LORD had not spoken. Then Ezekiel denounced the people, the commoners who followed their leaders' example. The populace too was involved in extortion and robbery (cf. vv. 25, 27), and in oppression of the needy. Rulers oppressed the common people, and the common people oppressed the helpless (Walvoord & Zuck, 1985). God was against any kind of oppression of the poor and the helpless. He wanted the Jews to treat those in need with love, because He also cared for them throughout their history. In times of need, He provided in their needs. They were oppressed in Egypt, and God release them from captivity. On their way to the Promised Land, God provided security, food and water. He was indicating that He cares for His people. They have a command not to be unjust to the innocent people who need their help.

2.2.6.1 Summary of Ezekiel 22:29

God was against any kind of oppression of the poor and the helpless. He wanted the Jews to treat those in need with love, because He also cared for them throughout their history. In times of need, He provided their needs. They were oppressed in Egypt, and God release them from captivity. God showed His acts of love to them when they were brought to the Promised Land. On their way to the Promised Land, God provided security, food and water, he was with them throughout their journey, He did not forsake them till they reached the place and the land that was promised to be their place. He was indicating that He cares for His people. They have a command not to practice injustice to the innocent people who need their help. People of Israel and Judah had to act in love, rather

than to oppress others.

2.3 Summary of OT

When reading the Bible, God is totally against poverty. This does not imply that poverty is sinful, but God hates that his children should suffer while others are rich. In the Old Testamental time, when people harvested their crops, they had to leave part of their harvest for the poor and the alien or strangers (Lev. 19:10). In Deuteronomy 15:4 God said that there should be no poor amongst the Israelites. This indicates that God does not want people to suffer because of lack of basic needs that are important for survival. People should share what they have with others. God loved even those who are poor, those who do not have the basic needs for survival. God always provides for the poor in their times of need and He even maintain their rights (Psalms 82:3; 68:10).

In all the verses in which exegetical analysis was done, it is clear that God wants His children to look after one another. His children had to share what they have with others. The Israelites had to do all this to show their obedience to God, because it was a command from their God who expected them to obey. They were not supposed to choose what was best for themselves, but they had to do what was good in the eyes of God. They were not supposed to be stingy, because even what they claim to be theirs, belongs to God. Even the earth belongs to God, and all that is in it. Sharing with those who did not have was good in the eyes of the Lord, and He commanded that those who have should see to it that they share with those who had nothing at all. He was, and He is, and will be the God of love to eternity. His love remains unconditional, even if

time changes, His love remains the same, and it will be the same until eternity.

2.4 Basic principles from the OT regarding poverty

- God and poverty: God is revealed as a God who hates poverty and therefore wants the poor to be cared for. He is on the side of both the rich and the poor
- The leaders of the people and poverty: Kings were commanded to help the poor and the needy and to defend them, and prophets warned the oppressors not to exploit the poor and the needy
- The people and poverty: They must treat the poor with love and fairness. The needs of the poor must be met by the people who live with them. The people have the responsibility to look after widows and orphans, and also to protect them. They must share their possessions with the poor and the hungry. God's people must have sympathy for the poor and the hungry and must address or provide in the needs of the poor
- The poor and poverty: The poor must be sure that they will be cared for. Full rights must be given to poor like to any other person.

2.5 Exegesis from NT regarding poverty

In the NT times there were many beggars and impoverished people, and these are mostly described by the Greek word "*ptocos*" meaning poor, although the synonyms "*penes*" and "*penicos*" were also employed. The NT usage was

largely influenced by the OT thought, which became distinct during Jesus' first synagogue reading in Nazareth (Luke 4:16-21) in which the lection was taken from Isaiah 61:1-3. In the New Testament exegesis will be done from Matthew 25:31-46, Luke 9:14-17; Acts 2:42-47; and James 2:14-17 and Paul's view on poverty. Attention will also be paid to the origins of the office of deacons, stewardship and discipleship in the NT.

2.5.1 Matthew 25:31-46

As we have seen in the Old Testament, it is clear that God provided for His children abundantly, so that they may share with others who have needs. When one reads in the New Testament in Matthew 25:31-46, Jesus Christ tells his disciples and all His listeners about the Final Judgement. In this pericope, He speaks about God's judgement and the separation of the obedient followers from the pretenders and unbelievers. The real way to prove one's belief is the way one acts. Other people should be treated like the Lord expects us to do. In other words, people must treat others as they would like others to treat them. When one stretches his hand to help other people, he or she must do it as if he is doing it to the Lord. What people do to others demonstrates the way they think about Jesus.

Jesus gave a command to all believers to feed the hungry, give the homeless a place to stay and look after the sick. The parable gives one a clear picture of actions that should be done by all Christians every day of their lives.

This part of Scripture forms part of the main theme, starting from Matt. 24:1-

25:46 and it is about Jesus' teachings on the Mount of Olives. Chapter 25:31-46 is about the day of Judgement that should take place. The pericope is a description of the last judgement. A judgement will come during which every man shall be sentenced to a state of everlasting happiness, or misery. Christ shall come, not only in the glory of His Father, but also in His own glory, as Mediator. The wicked and the godly dwell together in the same cities, churches, families, and can not always be distinguished from each other. Christ as the Shepherd will distinguish between those who are His and those who are not (Matthew, 1997:906).

The final section of the eschatological discourse ends fittingly in a great judgement scene. This pericope ends the formal teaching of Jesus in the Gospel according to Matthew. The passage is concerned with the return of the Son of Man (v. 31), and the immediately subsequent judgment, with the blessing of the righteous and the punishment of the wicked (Hagner, 1995:740). When Jesus refers to Himself as the Son of man, this is the only place in the Gospels where He speaks of the Son of man as the King (Tasker, 1983:240). There will be a great separation during the time of judgement. The following outline reflects the parallel structure within the passage:

- a. The glorious coming of the Son of Man (v. 31)**
- b. The great separation (vv. 32-33)**
- c. The reward of the righteous (vv. 34-40)**
 - 1. The reward (v. 34)
 - 2. The grounds (vv. 34-36)
 - 3. The protest (vv. 37-39)
 - 4. The principle (v. 40)

d. The judgement of the wicked (vv. 41-45)

1. The judgement (v. 41)
2. Its grounds (vv. 42-43)
3. The protest (v. 44)
4. The Principle (v. 45)

e. The final division (v. 46)

The most striking structural feature of the passage is the list of six needs, which occurs no less than four times. In all the four lists the words and their order do not change: hungry, thirsty, stranger, naked, sick, in prison. The first repetition of the initial list, in the mouths of the righteous (vv 37-39), occurs as three questions, each pair being introduced by, "pote se eidomen", "when did we see you (Hagner, 1995:740)?" Matthews stresses the importance of righteousness as good deeds, but as a part of a larger context in which God acts graciously for the salvation of His people. The deeds of mercy in the present passage are symbolic of a deeper reality, the main points of the parable is the acceptance or the rejection of the Christian faith (Hagner, 1995:746-747).

2.5.1.1 A summary of Matthew 25

It is clear that God will separate His followers from pretenders and non-believers. Jesus expects of his followers to treat the people he or she encounters in this world as if it is Jesus. What people do for others indicates what we think of what Christ said in the parable where He spoke about the coming judgment. He commands His followers to feed the hungry, provide the homeless with a place to stay, look after the sick. All the people does what Christ commands them, will

inherit eternal life, but all those who pretend and are unbelievers will go to hell, i.e. they will be thrown in the lake of fire. That is will be their punishment; all who disobey the commands of Jesus Christ will meet Him as a Judge. Including all those who do not feed the hungry, those who do not look after the homeless, the sick, the naked and the prisoners.

2.5.2 Luke 9:14-17

The gospel according to Luke reveals Jesus' attitude towards the poor as the central feature of His social stance. In His teaching and ministry, He espouses a concern for persons and groups from all social levels and backgrounds, but especially for the poor, the sick, for women and gentiles. Jesus' stance for these people brought Him into conflict with the political and economic structures of His day. In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus criticised the rich for accumulating surplus possessions instead of sharing with the poor and hungry. In response to oppression and injustice, Jesus espoused a new social order based on service and humility. The author of this Gospel describes Jesus as having a definite sympathy and concern for those who are poor and hungry (Roth, 1997:34-35).

When the disciples returned from their first tour around the country areas, they met Jesus Christ in Galilee and tried to have a quiet time alone with Him (Mark 6:30-32; John 6:1). Jesus was in need of rest, but He filled with pity when He saw the crowds of people flocking to Him in their need. They appeared to Him as a flock of spiritually starved sheep that had no food because there was no shepherd to feed them (Mark 6:33-34; John 6:2-4). Without Jesus the disciples

were unable to satisfy the physical needs of the people. With five small loaves and two fish, Jesus miraculously fed a huge crowd, reminding the disciples that the miracles they had done on their missionary tour had resulted solely from Jesus' power working in them (Mark 6:35-44; John 6:5-13) (Fleming, 1988:424).

It is clear in Luke that the Lord Jesus Christ had concern for the poor and the hungry. Christ was not just concerned, but He addressed their needs by providing in their spiritual needs and providing them with food to meet their physical needs. Christ did not only preach the Gospel, but He managed to provide food to the poor people whom He met while proclaiming the Good News. After what Christ did to the people, that is, because of the miracle He performed, they wanted to crown Him King immediately (Fleming, 1988:424).

The people who had gathered were apparently not local people, for the disciples wanted Jesus to send the crowd away so that they could find food and lodging. This would not have been necessary if the people had lived nearby and could have returned to their homes. When Jesus told His disciples to give the people something to eat, He was showing His men that it was humanly impossible to satisfy the crowd. The disciples admitted this and noted that food would have to be bought for the people if they were to feed them. The disciples stated that there were only five loaves of bread and two fish, clearly inadequate for such a large group of people. The 5,000 men (*andres*, "males") is no doubt a round figure, not counting the women and children who were present (Matt. 14:21). If the latter were also counted, the total might have been over 10,000.

After having the people sit down in groups of 50s, for ease in distributing the

food, Jesus thanked God the Father and gave out the food, using the disciples as waiters. Twelve basket full of broken food pieces were collected at the end of the meal, perhaps providing a basket of food for each disciple to eat. The word used for baskets (*kophinoi*) was considered typical of Jewish commerce.

The seven baskets from the feeding of the 4,000 (Mark 8:8) were a different kind of basket. Jesus, by this act of provision, had shown Himself sufficient for the nation Israel. This miracle is reminiscent or significant of Elisha. When Jesus spoke the Word of the Lord and a small amount of food fed many people, with some left over (Walvoord & Zuck, 1985, cf. Morris, 1983:167) Christ revealed Himself as the one who have compassion to people. His disciples also learnt to share the little they have. The miracle performed by Christ might be a great lesson to his followers. He did provide food for all the people, showing that He cares for their needs. He did not want them to listen to His preaching, but He also met their basic needs. He was good for them that is why many followed Him, although they wanted to make Him like a 'magician', only to find that His aim is to tell them about the Kingdom of God.

Christ wanted the people to experience God's love in eating, to see that it is God who provides food for them to eat. People realised that there is something good when one follows Christ, and they acknowledged that what they received comes from the God of love and care. The people who received food, realised that God is full of love for them (Henry, 1997:953).

The structure of Luke 9 is as follows:

- I. Christ commissions the twelve apostles (9:1-6)

- II. Herod's terror and the growing greatness of our Lord Jesus (9:7-9)
- III. Feeding the five thousand (9:10-17)
- IV. Christ suffering for His disciples and they for Him (18-27)
- V. Christ transfigured on the Mount (9:28-36)
- VI. A boy healed (9:37-42)
- VII. Jesus predicts His suffering and death (9:43-45)
- VIII. His disciples' ambition (9:46-50)
- IX. A Samaritan village rejects the Saviour (9:51-56)
- X. The answer Christ gave regarding the cost of discipleship (9:57-62)
(Mathew Henry, 1997:952)

Verses 14-19 form the third part in the structure of the chapter. It is about feeding the five thousand, and it starts from vv 10-17. Jesus Christ began the meal in the way the Jews normally began a meal: He took the food and said the blessing (NEB), looking up in heaven as He did so. The verb blessed does not mean that He somehow imparted a blessing to these physical objects. Such an idea is nowhere found in Scripture. The meaning that Jesus said a prayer of thanksgiving, a prayer that would begin with, 'Blessed art Thou, O Lord,' followed by mention of that for which thanks were offered, in this case the loaves and fishes. Bread was broken during the saying of this prayer, though here it will refer also to the breaking in pieces for distribution to the people. He gave the food to the disciples and they distributed it to the people until all were satisfied. That means that they all had a full meal and not simply a token (Morris, 1983:167-168).

Christ had pity on the people who gave an ear to what He has said, and He had

compassion for them, and he performed a miracle that made many of them remain behind. Bosch (1989:4) argues that in Luke the reign of God is breaking into this world not only when sick people are healed, but also when the poor are helped and when sinners are saved.

Without entering into detailed discussion of who the “poor” were in the first century Palestine, for Luke the poor were primarily those who were destitute and who permanently lived under the poverty line. He also uses the word as a sort of collective term for all the disadvantaged, particularly the captives, the maimed or injured, the blind, and the lepers. According to Bosch (1989:7), whoever experiences misery is in a very real sense, poor. Lazarus is primarily portrayed poor, but also sick. This shows that he suffers double affliction.

5.2.3.1 Summary of Luke 9:14-17

Christ set a good example; He felt piety for the people who gave an ear to the Gospel. He wanted to teach His disciples that they must serve others and share what they have even if it is just a little. It was important for the sake of the proclamation of the Gospel by Christ, but on the other hand for providing food to the audience. This was an act of love by the Lord Jesus Christ, it was not just a miracle, but it was an act of compassion to other people.

2.5.3 Acts 2:42-47

In Acts 2:42-47, it is clear that people were united and they cared even for their basic needs of life. They were not just Christians who worshipped the same God, but they were Christians who looked to the needs of others. They would sell their

property and possessions and distribute the money among all according to what each needed' Ac 2.45 (Louw & Nida, 1989:568).

According to Mathew Henry (1997:1023) this pericope reveals the history of the truly primitive church. The people kept close to holy ordinances, and abounded in piety and devotion, for Christianity, when admitted in its power, dispose the soul to communion with God in all those ways in which He has commanded them to meet Him as His children. The Christians of the first century were filled with the Holy Spirit and they had love and compassion for each other.

Williams (1975:71) says that the wonders and signs or miracles were evident tokens that the Messianic kingdom was breaking through from the coming age into the present one. After the apostles' era some manuscripts add 'in Jerusalem' and put the note of fear here instead of at the beginning. The primitive community experimented in a 'communism' of a totally different kind from the modern all-embracing economic and political form.

According to Van Deventer (1997:147), getting to know each other and taking note of one another's pleasures and problems creates an avenue or opportunity for more concrete ways of witnessing through sharing, as was the case in the congregation of Jerusalem. Van Deventer (1997:143) further argues that Berkhof refers to the third way in which the body of Christ or the church of Christ reveals itself to the world, and he said that it reveals itself through the ministry of mercy.

There was real unity in the church, and everyone was part of the family of believers. This was the true act of Christians who believe in the same Lord,

controlled by the same Spirit. They were practicing the acts of love to other members of the family of believers. The apostles did not only think of preaching the gospel, they did something about those who were physically needy. The church was not stereotyped; they cared for each other. The Christians in Jerusalem shared all they had so that all could benefit from God's gifts. That is, they were not egocentric (self-centred), they shared even their material wealth. There was no one who was taking care of his own interests, but they were all sharing whatever they had.

The selling of property and the common possession of the proceeds may imply that the early church expected the Lord to return soon and establish His kingdom. This may explain why the practice was not continued. Holding everything in common was not socialism or communism, because it was voluntary (cf. 4:32, 34-35; 5:4). Their goods were not evenly distributed, but were given to meet needs as they arose. This is where we can see the practice of *Koinonia* (Walvoord & Zuck, 1985).

The relationship was visible in this regard; it was not a forced relationship. Feeling for others was a passion to all Christians. They were able to identify the needs of all people, and they tried to meet them. This does not mean that the church was a charity organisation like the secular charity organisations, but it was the real household of God that served people according to their needs.

Christians in the first century were not saved to sit and be spectators to the horrible situation people were facing, but they were deeply involved in devising means to alleviate poverty. The Christians shared with others who had needs

equitably. Sharing may also mean that those who had shared what they had with those who did not have or who had little. The apostles were generous in sharing what they had with others. One can call this a true communion of saints, where there is no individualistic life, all people think of one another. Selfishness was not what the first Christians had, they believed in sharing, and means were devised to help those who had needs.

Fleming (1994:461) speaks of life in the new community referring to what happened in the first Christian church after the baptism with the Holy Spirit. He said that the early Christians had a strong sense of unity that they brought their money and possessions together to form a central pool, from which all could receive help as they had need (vv 43-45). They had fellowship in each other's homes, the Christian went to the temple for public prayer and witness day by day. Their number increased continually, as others who were attracted by the new life of joy and love joined them. they enjoyed the goodwill of the citizens of Jerusalem in general (vv 46-47).

2.5.3.1 Summary of Acts 2:42-47

This pericope reveals the Acts of communion in the household of God. The apostles and all the believers of the early church shared what they had with others. They brought all things in one pool, and shared with those who had needs. There was no one who stayed needy during this time. They sold even their belongings for the sake of helping others. They had fellowship together, prayed together, and shared what they had with others. It was life in the new community of believers after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. That made the

church grows, as the Lord added many who became Christians. That was the benefit of fellowship in the early church. There was a great increase in number of believers in the early church in Jerusalem.

2.5.4 James 2:14-17

The letter of James was possibly the first New Testament letter to be written. It seems to have been addressed mainly to Jewish Christians in general. The Christians were scattered throughout the region of the Bible's story (James 1:1). There is reference to the Christian meeting as a synagogue in the book of James (James 2:2), and there are references to Moses' law (James 1:18; 2:8-11; 5:4) (Fleming, 1994:570).

The argument of the epistle can be seen by James' use of "my brothers". He introduced this paragraph with a rhetorical question, "what good is it if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds?" The emphasis is not on the true nature of faith, but on the false claim of faith. It is the spurious boast of faith that James condemned. Such "faith" does no "good"; there is no "profit" (*ophelos*, used in the NT only here and in v. 16; 1 Cor. 15:32). It is worthless because it is all talk with no walk. It is only a habitual empty boast ("claims" is in the pres. tense). Can such faith save? A negative answer is anticipated in the Greek. Merely claiming to have faith is not enough. Works prove genuine faith (Walvoord & Zuck, 1985).

The rhetorical question is followed by a hypothetical but realistic illustration: Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. James frequently wrote about the poor: (1:9, 27; 2:2-6, 15). According to Tasker (1983:63) James

shatters the confidence of those who think faith alone possesses any value, just as surely as Jesus did when He said, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Mat. 7:21; cf. 25:45).

Tasker (1983:63) continues to say that real faith unites a man with Christ so that his thoughts and actions come under the control of the Holy Spirit. Spurious faith has no saving power. The translation "*can faith save him?*" is misleading, and fails to bring out the force of the Greek definite article. We should read either the Revised Version "*can that faith save him?*" or Revised Standard Version "*Can his faith save him?*" There is no doubt that true faith alone, whereby men have part in Christ's righteousness, atonement, and grace saves their souls, but it produces holy fruits, and is shown to be real by its effect on their works, while mere assent to any form of doctrine, or mere historical belief of any facts, differs from this saving faith (Matthew Henry, 1997:1225).

For one in need of the basics of life, sentimental good wishes do little good, like the common Jewish farewell, Go, I wish you well (lit, "Go in peace. " cf. Jud. 18:6; Mark 5:34; Luke 7:50). If nothing is done to fill the pressing need for warm clothes and satisfying food, what good is it? The same phrase that James used to introduce this paragraph (James 2:14) is repeated for emphasis. His concern was the relationship between the rich and poor Christians. In the very first chapter James mentions the relationship between the rich and the poor (1:9-11). The theme being that Christian status is not affected by poverty or wealth.

In the churches to which James wrote, some were rich, others were poor. James

assures them that there will be no problem in mixing with each other in true fellowship if all realise that through Christ they have equal status before God. The poor as well as the rich have a high position in Christ, the rich as well as the poor must humble themselves in coming to Christ. People are foolish to seek eagerly after financial status, for it has no lasting value (James 1:9-11) (Fleming, 1994:570-571).

The vain boast, faith by itself, or faith in and of itself with no evidence of action, is dead. Workless faith is worthless faith; it is unproductive, sterile, barren, and dead! Great claims may be made about a corpse that is supposed to have come to life, but if it does not move, if there are no vital signs, no heartbeat, no perceptible pulse, it is still dead. The evidence silences the false claims (Walvoord & Zuck, 1985). According to Tasker (1983:63) mercy has been shown to be an inevitable product of love, and James proceeds to demonstrate where loving action is conspicuous by its absence, there is irrefutable evidence that real faith is lacking.

2.5.4.1 Summary of James 2:14-17

One of the important themes in James is the relation between rich and poor. The pericope starts from verses 14-26, and it is about faith and deeds. James in this pericope told his first readers that faith without deeds is dead. In other words, deeds or works should accompany saving faith. He was trying to say that faith must bear fruits in the life of Christians. It must not be just bare faith without works. It must be accompanied by acts of love, knowing that the one who is above all things is Christ the Head of the church, and all Christians, rich and poor

are equal. There is no one superior to the other, they should all subject themselves to the headship of Christ.

2.6 Summary of the NT

The world of Jesus was characterized by poverty; there were poor people who were oppressed by unjust political and economic structures that limited people's ability to develop. There were rich and poor people during the time of the New Testament. The New Testament is set against a particular system, and it speaks of the Kingdom of God as a place where the poor must be cared for. The New Testament lets one understand that a church, which has a family orientation as its basis, should provide a home for the poor (Vos, 2001:49). In the New Testament exegesis was done in Matthews 25: 31-46; Luke 9:14-17; Acts 2:42-47; and James 2:14-17.

In the New Testament it is also clear that God wanted the poor to be cared for by those who have. God wanted Christians to share what they have with other people. It was necessary for all Christians to know that God put them in the world with what they possess, so that they can share their possessions with other people. In other words, He did not want people to be greedy. In Acts 9:36-42; Dorcas made an enormous impact on her community by always doing well and helping the poor. She made robes and other clothing. When she died the room was filled with mourners, that is, people she had helped filled the room, crying for her because she did what was good for them. The responsibility of the church was to help others who have needs. They have to look after one another.

2.7 Basic principles from NT regarding poverty

- Jesus Christ and the poor: Jesus' attitude towards the poor was that He felt pity for the people in need and the church must follow his example. He provided food several times to his audience as an act of love and compassion towards other people. He taught people to do the same.
- The leaders and the poor: Leaders must be involved in Jesus' acts of helping the poor and carry on the work. Just like Paul collected money from congregations for the poor in Jerusalem, the church must be a giving church.
- The church and the poor: The church acted as a communion in the household of God under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. They felt for all people who suffered and had compassion with them. They took care for orphans, disabled and widows. They shared what they had with others. The church addressed and provided in the needs of the people. The church of today must follow the example
- The poor and poverty: They were thankful for the grace of others. They were satisfied with the gifts they received. This gives a true message to the poor of this day.

2.8 General concepts for servants from the OT and NT

When reading both the OT and the NT, one can deduce the same principle as an underlining principle: The Principle of God's love who hates poverty. God

revealed Himself as the one who hates poverty, and He does not want His people to suffer. Another thing that a person can deduce from the OT and the NT is that God wants His children to share the wealth that He entrusted to them. He wants them to take care for each other, reaching the needs of the brothers and sisters, parents, and all the people, this includes looking after orphans and widows.

The general basic principle is that there must be no poor among all the people. Strangers must also be cared for. The act of love must be practical as the fruits of true faith. There is no need for a Christian to say he loves his sister or brother, whilst not giving him or her what he or she needs. These are not just principles, but they are commands from God, all people are bound by these commands, so that there would be no poor among His children.

2.9 Diaconal

A deacon is an ecclesiastic charged with the temporal affairs of the church. The starting point of deacon service is in Acts 2:42. Their work was clearly defined in the early church. Acts 2:42 and 4:32-37 describe the mutual care for believers in the congregation in Jerusalem. The apostles were occupied with this work, as later described in Acts 6, the office of deacon was instituted for the purpose of reaching the needy (Vorster, 2003:45). They were ordained by the apostles, Acts 6:1-6. When the church was growing in Jerusalem, it was a question of administering relief in the church. Christians as well as their forebearers took their social responsibility seriously, and the need of an individual was the responsibility of the whole group. When there was an increase in number of

believers, that is, when the size of the group increased and the work of the preaching and teaching ministry expanded, the relief work was neglected.

The overlooked widows sent in complaints. The apostles decided to appoint men to do the job of food distribution whilst they were busy preaching the Word of God. Stephen was one of the appointed to do this particular job. This is clear when we read Acts 6:1-7. They began as a small seed, and they grow. New situations call forth new devices, new provisions, new organisations, new methods, and new men, and Stephen was one of those men (Butrick, et al, 1954:88-89). Qualifications of, 1 Tim. 3:8-13. The Greek word translated as deacon signifies servant, and is so translated in Matt. 23:11; John 12:26. It is also translated as minister in Mark 10:43; 1 Cor. 3:5; 1 Thess. 3:2 (Swanson, 1994).

According to Vorster (2003:45) the commonly used Greek word is "*diakonos*", expressing the idea of service. The daily distribution may be a reference to the public assistance given by means of the ape or common religious meal. The case of widows without legal protection was particularly hard, and the church quickly copied the Jewish custom of providing funds for their relief. Later the widows appear to have been a recognised body with their names on a roll (1 Tim. 5:9) (Butrick et al, 1954:88-89).

When one reads the descriptions of the early church, the miracles, the sharing and generosity, the fellowship, one may wish that the church of today could have been part of this perfect church. The early church had problems just as today's church does, but they had to look for solutions to solve their problems to make

sure that their problems do not become stumbling blocks for the proclamation of the Gospel. The problem that developed in the early church was that Hebraic Jews, native Jewish Christians, spoke Aramic, a Semitic language. The Grecian-speaking Christians were probably Jews from other countries who were converted at Pentecost. The Greek-speaking Christians complained that their widows were being unfairly treated. In order to solve this problem, the apostles put seven respected Greek-speaking men in charge of a food distribution program. This solved the problem and allowed the apostles to keep their focus on teaching and preaching the Good News about Jesus Christ (Acts 6:1). The people chosen to serve tables had to be duly qualified. They had to be filled with gifts and graces of the Holy Ghost, necessary to rightly managing the trust, men of truth, and hating covetousness (Matthew Henry, 1997:1028).

One can say that the early church was growing and the needs were increasing. One need was to organise the distribution of food to the poor. The seven people chosen had to administer the distribution of food. They had to serve the people out of love, without discrimination. Each person has a part to play in the life of the church (this is clear when one looks at the metaphor used in 1 Corinthians 12 dealing with the parts of the body). If there are other responsibilities in the church, Christians determine their God-given abilities and priorities and then get other people to help. This is exactly what the apostles did in the church of Jerusalem. Those who had gifts were put into office by the apostles to work as servants of Christ. The men who were chosen had to be filled by the Holy Spirit.

The requirements for the men who had to handle the food program were as follows: they had to be filled with the Holy Spirit and wisdom. People who carried

heavy responsibilities and worked closely with others had to have these qualities. In other words, they had to be spiritually matured and wise (Acts 2:1-3).

This reveals to that it is not possible to work with people who have problems. In order to be able to preach the Good News of Jesus Christ the church tried to help in finding effective ways to deal with the distribution of food to the needy and the hungry.

The collection made was not meant to alleviate poverty as a form of Christian charity only. Paul's repeated and well-argued insistence on the need for churches to contribute to the alleviation of poverty of the Jerusalem community stands in stark contrast to his disavowal of personal support. His emphasis on the collection confirms his own commitment and the early church's concern with care for the marginalized in the community: widows and orphans, the poor, the sick and the elderly. It can be argued that Paul's insistence that those who could, should work, enabled not only their own independence but also the potency to provide relief to those who were in need (Punt, 2000:470-471).

Punt (2000:473-477) argues that Paul never glorifies poverty or the lack of sufficient material resources, and he gave the purposes of the collection. Punt then gives four purposes of the collection:

1. **Helping the poor.** Concern for the poor was a dominant element in both Jewish and Christian piety.
2. **The collection was for charity,** a typical way to address poverty in the early church.
3. It was also **an act of social welfare** in an economic emergency. Paul's

argument is that generous giving is a "sign of grace" (*charis*) and a ministry (*diakonia*) of the church.

4. Contribution of the collection will **demonstrate genuine love** of the Corinthian Christians, because they will be imitating the love of Christ (2 Cor. 8:1-15).

2.9.1 Summary of 2.9

Deacons were very important in the early Christian church. The church was growing and the apostles were helping in distributing food to the widows and the needy. This was the duty of the apostles before the introduction of this office. It was an office introduced to help in the food distribution whilst the apostles were proclaiming the Gospel. They decided that they must choose men to help in this regard. Stephen was also among those chosen for this duty. Deacons had to be filled with the gifts and the grace of the Holy Ghost. They were chosen from among Christians, nobody else could be chosen to become a deacon, only Christians. Their duty was to serve people with needs whilst the apostles busy preaching the resurrected Christ to all the people.

2.10 Stewardship

Stewardship in the church can be another solution to the problem of poverty. It is necessary for the church to think along the lines of all Christians being involved in the service in the household of God. This will involve the money or property of all the people who can help or create jobs for other people inside and outside the

church. The ethical teaching issued by John the Baptist is in fact presented as a reply to the questions of the multitude who asked, "what then shall we do?" This question is a sort of response to his sermon, which is tinted (coloured) with immanent (pending) eschatology, demanding the production of good fruits in order to make them ask the question. John replies, he who has two coats, let him share with him who has none, and he who has food, let him do likewise (Luke 3:10 and 11).

At creation man was entrusted with the vital task of caring for God's creation. Stewardship involves sacrificial giving, and caring for the needy. Caring for the needy was the initial role of the church. It is probable to believe that stewardship is the most important function of the church, acting as an umbrella service embracing numerous activities that should be performed by various churches today (Senkhane, 2002:23-24).

Luke depicts those who do not have the most basic and essential necessities in the daily life of human beings, such as clothing and food. The word used in verse 11 is *metadidwmi*, which expresses his emphasis on distribution of wealth to the poor (Kim, 1998:169).

In Luke 3:11-14 there are three things that John is emphasising, demanding responses:

1. Firstly, he demands that the people must share what they have with those who need it;
2. Secondly, he speaks of those who have jobs, to do it well and with fairness;

3. And thirdly, he urges people to be content with what they earn. In other words, John was saying that people must share what they have with others; they must do their jobs honestly and well (Life Application, 1991:1796).

James, on the other hand, writes about how the saved person proves what salvation is all about. People have no right to believe that we are saved if they do not see a change in the lives of Christians. A sinner is saved by faith, without works (Eph. 2:8–9), but true saving faith leads to works (Eph. 2:10). Being a Christian is not a matter of what we say with our lips; it involves what we do with our lives.

We do not show our faith in Christ only through great deeds of achievement, such as those listed in Heb. 11, but by the things we say and do, day by day. This is clear even when one reads 1 John 3:16–18 along with vv. 14–16. Real love is an action, not a feeling. It produces selfless, sacrificial giving. The greatest act of love is giving oneself for others. The question that arises is how one can lay down his or her life? The answer to this question is simply by serving others with no thought of receiving anything in return; one can also put other people's desires first, helping those in need.

Faith that does not lead to works is dead faith (vv. 17, 26), not living faith. There is a challenge in v. 18: "Show me your faith without your works!" This is impossible to do! The only way faith can be expressed in the Christian's life is by practical loving obedience to the Word of God. Even the devil has dead faith! (v. 19) Read Matt. 8:29 and Acts 16:17 to see how the demons acknowledge Christ. Still, this kind of faith will not save them (Warren, 1992). The church exists to

facilitate the care of the earth and the human beings that inhabit it through offering genuine relationship and enabling persons to discover the meaning of life and the world. This means that the existence of the church entails its purpose of caring for God's creation by maintaining a mutual relationship between persons and to realise the purpose of life in the world (Senkhane, 2002:21).

The six gifts mentioned are serving, teaching, encouraging, contributing, leadership, and showing mercy. Contributing to people's needs should be done with generosity (*en haplotepti*), not skimpily (cf. 2 Cor. 8:2; 9:11, 13). Managing, leading, or administering (*proistamenos*, lit., "standing before"; cf. *proistamenous*, "who are over," 1 Thes. 5:12) should be done diligently (*en spoudeu*, "in eagerness, earnestness"), not lazily or half-heartedly. Bestowing mercy should be done cheerfully (*en hilarotepti*, "in gladness"), not with sadness. Three of these seven gifts are mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:28 (prophets, teachers, administration); two (prophets and pastor-teachers) are included in Ephesians 4:11; and two (administering and serving) are listed in 1 Peter 4:10-11. Whatever one's gift, one should exercise it faithfully as a steward of God.

Monsma (1991:23) argues that stewardship should increase in local churches. In this case he was referring to people who were in the Christian Rural Development. All the families that received assistance from the above mentioned organisation had to give tithes of the farm produce. In this case, at the end of every harvest a thanksgiving service was organised during which co-operatives and individuals bring their gifts. Stewardship involves more than just consumption behaviour, one should also use time and talents and other resources that God has entrusted to one productively. One should not just seek to maximise ones

income from work and investments, but should seek to use talents in ways that will help neighbours as well, especially the poor neighbours. Christians should work through existing institutions to help the poor meet their needs and should be active in the creation of new institutions that does this, as well as in individual acts towards this end (Monsma et al., 1991:17).

2.10.1 Summary of 2.10

God created man in His image to be a steward, that is, He created Him to work in the world He puts Him in. As steward, man has to serve others for the sake of God. It is clear that man was created to have a good relationship with others. In order to have good relationships with others, he has a duty to serve in the place, church and in all spheres of life where God puts Him. A steward is someone who takes care of other people. Man as steward has a duty to care for what God created, including other people. Man does not have an option, but it is a command to care for others who are under the stewardship.

2.11 Discipleship

According to Senkhane (2002:26) discipleship is a many-faceted lifestyle. It is the calling of the church to be disciples. The church was called upon to undertake the role of discipleship in order to assume God's leadership (cf. Genesis 12:1-5; Deuteronomy 1:33, etc). The church is again called to provide shelter for the homeless. It is an undertaking and the responsibility of the church (cf Exodus

22:21; Numbers 15:15-16:29; Deuteronomy 10:17-19, etc.). Senkhane (2002:26) says that the church must look after the poor. Providing for the poor is part of the discipleship of the church (cf. Exodus 22:25-27; 23:9; Isaiah 3:14-15; Jeremiah 20:13; 22:15-17). The church must also take care for the handicapped as part of its discipleship, and again she must speak on behalf of the oppressed (cf. Isaiah 10:1-3; Amos 4:1-2).

A disciple (from Lat. *discipulus*, 'pupil, learner', corresponding to Gk. *mathētēs*, from *μανθάνω*, 'to learn') is basically the pupil of a teacher. The corresponding Heb. term *limmūd* is somewhat rare in the OT (Is. 8:16; 50:4; 54:13; cf. Je. 13:23), but in the rabbinical writings the *talmūd* (cf. 1 Ch. 25:8) is a familiar figure as the pupil of a rabbi from whom he learned traditional lore. In the Greek world philosophers were likewise surrounded by their pupils. Since pupils often adopted the distinctive teaching of their masters, the word came to signify the adherent of a particular outlook in religion or philosophy (The New Bible Dictionary, 1962).

Jewish usage is seen in the NT references to the disciples of the Pharisees (Mk. 2:18). The Jews considered themselves to be ultimately disciples of Moses (Jn. 9:28), since his teaching formed the basis of rabbinic instruction. The followers of John the Baptist were known as his disciples (Mk. 2:18; Jn. 1:35). The term was probably applied to his close associates. They practiced prayer and fasting in accordance with his instructions (Mk. 2:18; Lk. 11:1), and some of them cared for him in prison and saw to his burial (Mt. 11:2-7; Mk. 6:29).

Although Jesus (like John) was not an officially recognized teacher (Jn. 7:14f.),

he was popularly known as a teacher or rabbi (Mk. 9:5; 11:21; Jn. 3:2), and his associates were known as disciples. The word can be used for all who responded to his message (Mt. 5:1; Lk. 6:17; 19:37), but it can also refer more narrowly to those who accompanied him on his travels (Mk. 6:45; Lk. 8:2f.; 10:1), and especially to the twelve apostles (Mk. 3:14). Discipleship was based on a call by Jesus (Mk. 1:16-20; 2:13f.; Lk. 9:59-62; even Lk. 9:57f. presupposes Jesus' invitation in general terms). It involved personal allegiance to him, expressed by following him and giving him exclusive loyalty (Mk. 8:34-38; Lk. 14:26-33). In at least some cases it meant literal abandonment of home, business ties and possessions (Mk. 10:21, 28), but in every case readiness to put the claims of Jesus first, whatever the cost. Such an attitude went well beyond the normal pupil-teacher relationship and gave the word 'disciple' a new sense. Faith in Jesus and allegiance to him are what determine the fate of men at the last judgment (Lk. 12:8f.).

Those who became disciples were taught by Jesus and appointed as his representatives to preach his message, cast out demons and heal the sick (Mk. 3:14f.). Although these responsibilities were primarily delegated to the Twelve, they were not confined to them (Mk. 5:19; 9:38-41; Lk. 10:1-16). According to Luke, the members of the early church were known as disciples (Acts 6:1f., and frequently thereafter). This makes it clear that the earthly disciples of Jesus formed the nucleus of the church and that the pattern of the relationship between Jesus and his earthly disciples was constitutive for the relationship between the risen Lord and the members of his church. The word, however, is not found outside the Gospels and Acts, and other NT writers used a variety of terms (believers, saints, brothers) to express more fully the characteristics of

discipleship after Easter.

Care for the poor is basic to Christian discipleship. The poor are always with us, the church's mission must therefore constantly address issues of poverty. One should also bear in mind that the poor does not only refer to economical poverty, the term refers to any in need. In Luke's Gospel, even the wealthy Zacchaeus belong to the "lost whom Christ seek and save". This means that one has to love his neighbour as himself. This is the second commandment of love (Rodd, 1998:147).

2.11.1 Summary of 2.11

The church is called to be disciples in this world. The church was called upon to undertake the role of discipleship in order to assume God's leadership. The church is again called to provide shelter for the homeless. This is one of the responsibilities to be undertaken by the church. The church must look after the poor, and providing for the poor is part of the discipleship of the church. The church must also take care for the handicapped as part of its discipleship, and again she must speak on behalf of the oppressed and the weak.

2.11.2 Summary of the deacon, steward, and disciple

The church is a disciple in the world, and it should be actively involved in solving the problems that affects man. She is situated to act in the community at large, she is called to undertake the role of discipleship in order to assume God's

leadership. She is called to provide shelter for the homeless. This is one of the responsibilities that the church should undertake. She must look after the poor, and providing for the poor is part of her discipleship. The church must also take care of the handicapped as part of its discipleship, and again she must speak on behalf of the oppressed and the weak.

God created man in His image to be a steward, that is, He created Him to work in the world He puts Him in. As steward, man was to serve others for the sake of God. He was created to have a good relationship with others. In order to have good relationship with others, he has a duty to serve in the place, church and in all spheres of life where God puts Him. A steward is someone who takes care of other people. Man as steward has a duty to care for what God created, including creation and other people. Man does not have an option, and it is a command to care for others.

2.11.3 Basis theoretical principles from general concepts for servants in the OT and NT

- Leaders for the poor: God provided deacons as servants to lead the congregation in serving the poor. They had to be filled with the Holy Spirit and his gifts. Their duty was to serve people with needs and help the congregation to do the same.
- The congregation and the poor: The congregation must be stewards on behalf of God. By serving the poor the church must be disciples, doing mission work towards the unbelievers that are poor.

2.11.4 Final basis theoretical principles from the Bible

- God is revealed as a God who treats both rich and poor equally and demands every person to have an open eye and heart for poor and needy persons
- The church must follow the attitude of Jesus to feel piety for the people in need and act in love and compassion towards people in need of food, a home and other problems
- The leaders of the church, especially the deacons, must defend and help the poor and lead the congregation to obey God in giving love to people in need.
- The members of the church must be involved in the needs of the poor people who live with them, and must take responsibility for widows and orphans.
- The church must act as a community of love under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and address the needs of poor people. In the community
- The poor must be thankful for the love of others and satisfied with the help they receive from the church.

CHAPTER 3

3.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to investigate the character of poverty in the region and in the Reformed churches in Synod Midlands. In order to achieve this objective, books, journals, articles and some electronic materials will be consulted.

3.1 Work plan for chapter 3

In order to achieve the first objective, a literature study with a focus Sociology will be done. This study will concentrate on means to alleviate poverty. There will be an introduction, a work plan of chapter 3, a discussion of a theological view on poverty alleviation, a summary of the theological view on poverty alleviation, a discussion of the saved and their calling to serve others, a summary of the saved and their calling to serve others, a discussion of the calling of the church to care for their neighbours, a summary of the calling of the church to care for their neighbours, a discussion of possible solutions for poverty, a discussion of the church's partnership and participation with the government to alleviate poverty, a discussion of the church and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO's), and finally a summary of solutions for poverty, and the final summary of Chapter 3 in accordance with the aim stated in the introduction of this chapter.

3.2 Theological view on poverty alleviation

According to Carstens (1999:259) the magnitude or size of poverty and need, as well as the inequality in South African education, make people feel powerless and unable to effect change or make a difference. He also said that inadequate theological foundation and the resulting selective Biblical values lead to an unsatisfactory missionary practice. Although the Dutch Reformed Church was removed from being blamed because of its provision of charitable and social services throughout the years (especially towards its own members and community), it was nevertheless influenced by the era of the Enlightenment. The result has been an attenuation or decrease of the churches' responsibility towards the world, and an unsatisfactory missionary practice. This was at least the process of transformation in the Dutch Reformed Church. According to this information, it is clear that there are some churches that are involved in alleviating poverty.

According to Van Niekerk (2002:164) the Dutch Reformed Church has confessed its guilt in supporting Apartheid, and has also launched an initiative to combat the escalating or increasing poverty in South Africa. It is true that there are churches that are directly involved in poverty alleviation programs, but one can still say that little has been done to combat or fight poverty on the side of the churches. In other words, not enough has been done. The churches should accelerate and get into a high-speed gear to hasten the process of alleviating poverty.

The government is also taking part in alleviating poverty, and making a better life for all. After the presidential and budget speeches of 2004, the press evaluated

both speeches. Sowetan Newspaper (20.02.2004:2) reports that Finance Minister Trevor Manuel promises a better life for the poor. Creating jobs is also essential for the government, looking ahead to the 2009 election. The government allowed its budget deficits cross the threshold of 3% of Gross domestic products over the next few years, slightly up from 2,6 % in 2003-2004.

On the issue of the government creating jobs, the church should raise its voice a bit higher, to make the government aware of the command to till the land. That is, after the fall of man, God said to Adam, "Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat of it,' Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return (Genesis 3:17, 19)". It is the government's responsibility to see to it that jobs are created, and the poor, the orphans and street children are cared for.

The government should devise some means to alleviate poverty, as it is trying to do at the present moment. There is still more to be done in this regard through controlling the funds given to projects, and funds provided to help empower blacks (BEE, i.e. Black Economic Empowerment).

Stan Buckey (1993:5) says that the people concerned with rural development are outsiders, who are themselves neither rural nor poor. Many are headquarters and field staff of government organisations. They include academic researchers, aid agency personnel, bankers, businessmen, consultants, doctors, engineers, journalists, lawyers, politicians, priests, school teachers, staff of training

institutes, workers in voluntary agencies, and other professionals. However, at this point in time, professionals are deeply involved in the process of fighting poverty in our country. They are not just going there as spectators. However, there is still more to be done to eradicate poverty in South Africa.

In his speech at the 5th Annual Centenary Celebration in 26th October 2001, Skweyiya (2001:2) said that the poverty and inequality report of 1998 has decisively shaped the programs and resources that are being devoted to eradicating poverty at the national, provincial and local levels of government. He also mentioned the commitment of the government to fighting poverty and inequality. The program that is used by the government is called the Integrated Sustainable Rural Development Program. The government is setting some measures to eradicate poverty. Yet it is still one of the major problems that we have in our country and the world at large. Poverty remains the enemy in many places of our country, especially in the farm areas and townships, including all the rural areas.

President Mbeki said at the launch of the Integrated Sustainable RDP (<http://www.polity.org.za/html/govdocs/speeches/2001/sp707.html>) [Date of access: 11 Mar. 2004] that: "clearly, throughout our country, our rural areas are characterised by high level of poverty, limited economic and employment opportunities, underdeveloped infrastructure and limited services with marginalized communities economically dependent on urban areas. For decades rural communities were denied adequate education and youth forced to abandon their homes and seek jobs in the cities. This caused many people not to be well equipped educationally. When the factories decrease or limit the number of

workers, those who left school at an early stage became the first targets on the list to loose their jobs”.

Recent theological thought on the matter of liberating the poor from poverty was instructive, especially Roman Catholic thinking in Latin America.

3.2.1 Summary of a theological view on poverty alleviation

It is important to note that little has been done to eradicate poverty, especially on the side of the churches in the resort of Synod Midlands. There is still more to be done to help in fighting poverty. Churches should involve themselves to provide food, shelter, clothes, and better education to all the people. The church leaders must be involved in the running of projects in communities that are funded by the government and other organisations that are helping to alleviate poverty. The government must also help in creating job opportunities and providing funds to help in the running of projects. The government must be creative in supporting poverty alleviation organisations and programs like Rural Development Program (RDP). The government is busy with the programs to alleviate poverty.

The Black Economic Empowerment, and the Integrated Sustainable Rural Development Program is meant for poverty alleviation, and the development of rural areas. The government must be more active in creating job opportunities. They must not just give money to the people, but they must give them work to do so that they can be responsible in using it. The churches are not involved in a satisfactory manner in the process of alleviating poverty. The government is trying to fund rural projects to ensure that the people in the rural areas enjoy a

better life, as it is the policy or motto of the government that it is for the people, and it ensures that all people have a better life.

3.3 *The saved and their calling to serve others*

Reformed theologians like Calvin insisted that religion in general, and Christianity in particular, encompasses all of life, including our social, economic, and political activities, and many Reformed theologians have followed Calvin in calling Christians to work to relieve poverty. In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. God saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good (Genesis 1:1, 31). Included in this good creation are human beings, who were given a special place in creation. They were created in the image of God Himself "*Imago Dei*". Theologians have interpreted this in various ways, but whatever else it means it certainly means that all human beings have an innate dignity and must be treated with respect, no matter who they are or what position in society they have. Men and women, rich and poor, powerful and weak, black and white, all bear God's image and must be accordingly respected (Monsma, 1991:3).

The response of many non-poor people is that the poor could escape poverty if only they wanted to. In the case of the blind, the aged and the lame such an argument is false, it is not true. Some of the lame people are unable to work. Some adults who are affected by poverty, received little or poor education as children, and although many work at low-income, insecure jobs, most remain in poverty. Some employed but not registered, so that they are at risk of being expelled by their masters or bosses. This is what is happening to farm- or

domestic workers (Henry, 1973:519).

Sapa in the Sowetan Newspaper (2004:2) said, "Poverty has become one of the difficult elements for the poor to bear, because it represents an island of deprivation in a sea of affluence". The government is planning to help the needy, religious leaders and government should agree to closer cooperation on poverty, unemployment, HIV/AIDS and the social security system. Thirty religious leaders met social development Minister Zola Skweyiya in Capetown. The participants who attended the meeting with the social development minister made a commitment to meet in future to discuss cooperation between faith-based organisations and the government. A pilot project of cooperation with the Western Cape government was discussed.

Thwala (2004:13) argued that eight million South Africans are jobless and more than 20 million live in poverty. There should be expanded public works programs that would signify a response to poverty and unemployment in South Africa.

According to Peterse (2000:3) there is one enormous problem, which makes it impossible for most people in South Africa to achieve and enjoy a good life. The obstacle in the country of South Africa is the problem of poverty. Shabangu (2000:16) speaks of relative poverty that is based upon comparison of living standard in a community where social participation is considered pivotal or essential. The kind of measurement entails measuring poverty taking into consideration the convention of time and space that must be related to the needs and demands of a changing society. Shabangu gave examples of relative poverty, and said an overcrowded family living in one-roomed house can be

regarded as poor in our contemporary society, as compared to other members of the society. According to Shabangu (2000:17-18), the family can be crowded because of a lack of or inadequate use of family planning measures, associated with poor families. The problem of overcrowding can be avoided only if one has a choice and can afford accommodation. Lack of choice in this regard becomes a problem, and it forces people to tolerate their situation.

How can this problem be solved, and who must be involved in helping to alleviate poverty? By the 1920's many Afrikaners had migrated from the farms to the cities and towns. They were often reduced to poverty. For this "poor white" problem, the Afrikaans Reformed Churches provided material and spiritual support. This concern for the poor did not extend to the black community (Yi, 2002:29). This means that the Afrikaners cared for their own material and spiritual needs.

3.3.1 Summary of the saved and their calling to serve others

Calvin insisted that religion in general, and Christianity in particular, encompasses all of life, including our social, economic, and political activities, and many Reformed theologians have followed Calvin in calling Christians to work actively to relieve poverty. It is the calling of the church to help in alleviating poverty. The Bible reveals that in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. God saw that everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good (Genesis 1:1, 31). Included in this good creation are human beings, who were given a special place in creation. They were created in the image of God Himself "*Imago Dei*". The saved are called to treat the poor with respect, no matter who they are or what position they have in society. Men and women, rich and poor,

powerful and weak, black and white, all bear God's image and thus must be respected accordingly.

3.4 Calling for the church to care for their neighbours

There is a great need for the South African church (all denominations) to transform into a real diaconal church, a serving church that follows in the footsteps of our Lord Jesus Christ, who came to serve people in need with His words and deeds. Such a church can be called a missionary diaconal church. It is one that joins in the "*missio Dei*", God's mission to a world in need, that is, God's self-revelation as the One who loves the world, God's involvement in and with the world, the nature and activity of God, which embraces both the church and the world, and in which the church is privileged to participate. "*Missio Dei*" enunciates or speaks the Good News that God is God-for-people (Pieterse, 2002:558).

Van Deventer (1988:28-29) argues that poverty can be so deviating that it denotes not only a physical condition but also an attitude in life, an outlook. The poor became voiceless, powerless, and they are at the mercy of the powerful. The dynamic of poverty is such that the oppressed poor finally accept the inhumanity and humiliation of their situation; they accept the status quo as the normal course of life. The poor then, are the apathetic, oppressed and manipulated human beings at the bottom of the social scale. Poverty and apathy go together.

Parker (1999:171) speaks of a quest for a Christ symbol, and he said that

theology in every period is the ongoing attempt to make sense of life's basic elements. Theology in our time, therefore, imaginatively reconstructs the ancestral images to meet the needs of contemporary life. The task of theologians is to construct conceptions appropriate for the orientation of contemporary human life.

The theological text struck home in the latter half of the 20th century as a notion of God moving in the world to reach people in distress, and of the church's role in that movement. The church is no longer an organization that takes the initiative in reaching out to people in spiritual and material need, it is God's initiative and movement in the world, which the church is privileged to join. God's concern is for the whole world, this should be the scope of the "*Missio Dei*". It affects all people in all aspects of their existence. It takes place in ordinary human history, not exclusively in and through the church. The church cannot withdraw itself from God's outreach in a poor country. If the church wants to be genuine or effective in this world, it will have to join God's work, which is being done anyway in innumerable projects conducted by government and non-governmental organizations of all kinds, as we all believe that we are inspired by God's Spirit, which is active all over the world (Ng'wesheni, 1999:163).

Mission is "*Missio Dei*", i.e. God's revelation, his love for and involvement in the world. The church should begin to be missionary on the basis of God's love and plan for salvation for the world. The entire Christian existence should be characterised by a missionary existence. Mission is about demonstration of God's unconditional and selfless love to all people. Christianity is missionary in nature. The missionary task is as coherent, broad and deep as the need and

exigencies of human life. This includes the church's missionary engagement in respect of the realities of injustice, oppression, poverty, and violence. Human need is not only spiritual, but it is also physical and emotional and abstract (Carstens, 1999:258-259).

According to Van Deventer (1988:24) people understand the problem of poverty in economic terms because it expresses the most obvious dimensions of the problem. In broad theological terms poverty can be described as having direct association with the power of sin, which has affected and distorted the total creation (*corruptio totalis*). Van Deventer (1988:28) says that it is possible to approach and define the problem of poverty from a theological exegetical perspective. Van Deventer (1988:28) also said that poverty is in essence a theological problem, seeing that an empty stomach means an insult to the image of God.

Hospitality refers to the love of strangers, and it includes tending towards others, attentive intention, intentional attention, yes to the other. An open church is a church in the service of God's kingdom, which takes part in the discussion of the value and norms, medical ethical matters, establishment of a just society, and the problems of violence and poverty. The church also becomes a refuge where courage can be engendered and hope instilled in many, including the poor (Vos, 2001:55).

3.4.1 Summary of Calling for the church to care for their neighbours

All churches (all denominations) must be transformed to become a real diaconal church. That is, the church must be a serving church, because it is the servant of God in the world. The church must follow in the footsteps of our Lord Jesus Christ, who came to serve people in need with His words and deeds. The church must become what one can call “a missionary diaconal church”. It is one that joins in the “*missio Dei*”, God’s mission to a world in need, that is, God’s self-revelation as the One who loves the world, God’s involvement in and with the world, the nature and activity of God, and in which the church is privileged to participate. The church of God must enunciate or speak the Good News that God is God-for-people. The church must remember the command to love neighbours as one loves himself or herself. Loving one’s neighbour means to care for his or her needs.

3.5 What can be the solution to poverty?

3.5.1 The church’s partnership and participation with the government to alleviate poverty

In some rural areas poverty is not only evident through poor services, which lead to indecent living conditions, it is also witnessed in the manner in which community participation operates. Community participation is understood and made possible through the meaning of community and mutual sharing of

behaviour and attitude. Apart from being a community, there are some factors that deter effective participation in some rural areas, namely:

3.5.1.1 Lack of mutual community cohesion or unity

Community is understood as a group of individuals occupying the same area of abode, sharing probably the same language, culture, identity and everything that identifies them as one, which is based on trust (Shábangu, 2000:53). The church is a community of believers who share the same belief, and worship the same God. There should be participation in helping to have development in each other. The community of believers must not ignore its partnership with the government, as it forms part of the government. Every member should participate in developing the community, because if they have different ways of dealing with issues pertaining to their community development, it will hinder such development (Shabangu, 2000:53).

3.5.1.2 There is a need for the community to have partnership with the government

Empowerment is vital in this regard and it can lead to effective participation. A process of mutual learning is encouraged through community participation. It is important that all members of the community get involved in community development activities. This includes even those who are Christians. The community must be empowered by the government. That is, the rural areas must be empowered from both community members and also on the side of the government. The community belongs to the government, and as part of the

government, it must be empowered by the government itself as the source of income. If that is not taken into consideration, there will be a downfall of the community development. That can attribute to the weakness of the community management structure, which is divided into two varying groups. The first group consists of the unskilled and perhaps illiterate members of the community, including traditional leaders, who do not understand the characteristics of community participation and are used to a traditional way of living. The other group consists of a group of men who enjoy full employment and those who own vibrant businesses and do not reside fully in the township or rural areas. The discrepancy hampers the development of the community as well as affecting the welfare in the sense of that the majority views of the community are not considered because of communication breakdown. There is a lack of understanding with the community leading structures that hinders the community from gaining attention from the government.

Shabangu (2000:55) states that the success of community participation is determined by the openness of the government policies, which refers to arenas of participation. Community participation in townships operates through the arena of exclusion, where the government is very remote from the community, which is as a result exacerbated or worsened by weak representation. The community is far from adopting a strategy that can alleviate poverty without mutual obligation and empowerment from the state.

3.6 The church and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO's)

Non-Governmental Organisations are valuable in the struggle against poverty. When organisations aim to alleviate poverty, the plight or troubles of the poor are solved. The process of developments through organisations become operative in an area and it brings hope in a hopeless situation. The experience of God's hand in the assistance of caring people is experienced by the needy. The poor experience the hand of God through the help they get in the NGO's, and they believe that God creates these organisations. Other people believe that the organisations are God's intervention in their situation (Pieterse, 2001:89-90).

According to Pieterse (2001:91), the poor experience God's love in the help they receive through the organisations that are meant to help the poor. One of the pastors said that verbal proclamation of the gospel avails little. The pastor launched projects supported by the American branch, where people were taught how to find food and homes. Projects should aim at improving the lives of the people, and that will help people to realise God's love and that He is with them also. Help from charity organisations makes the people realise that God always helps them. An example is one of the people whose house nearly collapsed during the February 2000 floods in the former Northern Province, recently known as Limpopo Province. Some houses collapsed and others nearly collapsed because of heavy rains. People considered the aid given to save the houses as a "gift from God". God was there and using people to help others who have needs.

This will include the community developments. In the first place one will have to first define community development. What is community development?

According to Nchunu (2002:19) it can be described by putting it within a broader context of development in terms of technological progress and economic growth. Economists assume that with economic growth the standard of living for the impoverished will also improve in the Third World countries. The primary aim of community development is to enhance people's abilities to solve their individual and community problems. He argues that it is achieved by mobilizing communities to learn to manage and sustain their own development without seeking assistance from outsiders. This means that for the community to develop, there is a need to mobilize people and share the aim and objectives of the community development.

South Africa has a history of inequality in terms of distribution of the country's income and resources. Poverty is more concentrated among African people living in rural areas. Africans or South Africans cannot adopt the Western approach or view of development. There will be a negative impact in South Africa if the approach used in the United States and other developed countries is applied in Africa. The western approach will facilitate poverty and imply that the rich become richer and the poor become poorer. Nchunu (2002:19) says that development can never take place in isolation. It is an integral part of the comprehensive social, political, psychological and economic changes taking place in a given country.

According to Nchunu (2002:20) community development can be regarded as a process, method, program, as well as a movement. Community development as a process moves by means of stages from one situation to the other. The community should undergo certain stages in order to attain its goals and

objectives. This suggests that development role players should also follow these stages and guidelines for implementing development policies. He mentions the key phases:

- Situation analysis
- Determining needs and unfulfilled opportunities
- Decision making about what can be done and should be done to rectify the situation
- Formulation of specific goals and objectives to be achieved.
- Moving towards the direction of achieving goals and objectives
- Monitoring and evaluation

Mchunu provides principles that must guide any community development intervention:

- Have people as a focal point: because if there is no focus, there will be no need for community development, because the community is a community when there are people. People are there to speed up development.
- Allow the presence of a worker who facilitates the process of community development, and who demands community involvement and participation. A facilitator will help in providing guidelines on how to run a successful project.
- Emphasis should be on self-help, this means that the community should gain from the process of development.

Mchunu said that community development is regarded as a program that consists of a set of procedures and a list of activities. There is no development without activities. The focus is placed on activities, implemented according to a

budget within a time frame. The success of community development as a program depends on the availability of specialized expertise.

3.6.1 Summary of: What can be the solution to poverty?

- There should be partnership and participation between the churches and the government to alleviate poverty
- There is a need for the church and the community to have partnership with the government.
- The church and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's) have to work together
- Organisations meant to alleviate poverty must use the church leaders in the running of projects

3.6 Final summary of Chapter 3 in accordance with the aim stated in the introduction of this chapter

In this chapter the main emphasis is on the collaboration of stakeholders, because poverty alleviation involves organisations, churches, and the government. The church should create this kind of relationship with the different stakeholders. That is, the church must strive to have good relationship with the government, organisations, NGO's and the community, who must see to it that they are involved in community projects that are meant to alleviate poverty. Church leaders must ensure that they are involved in the running of community projects, seeing to it that there is no misuse of funds. The church on its own

cannot manage to eradicate poverty, but its members, with all the leaders of the community and the community at large, should be involved in this process of fighting poverty.

CHAPTER 4

4. EMPIRICAL STUDY CONCERNING POVERTY ALLEVIATION

4.1 Method of the empirical study

The empirical study is based on the findings from interviews with members of the Reformed church in the black locations and townships. The pattern followed for the interview was a qualitative method. Questions were clarified, not with the view to channel the interviewed person, but with the view to make the participants understand the questions (Makhuvha, 2003:42).

The aim of this empirical study was to generate knowledge that would enable people to change the current situation into a more desirable situation in our country. Heitink (1999:221) says that empiricism is derived from the Greek Word *empera*, meaning "experience". The empirical perspective joins the basis theory to the practice theory (Makhuvha, 2003:42). It is an active research where the attitude of the Reformed churches with regard to alleviating poverty is very important.

According to Heitinks, (1999:229) there are different methods of doing empirical research, namely descriptive, explorative and testing hypotheses. Mchunu (2002:24) says that a qualitative researcher collects a large amount of information on one or few cases, goes into greater depth and gets more details on the cases being examined, and may use a case study approach.

The qualitative researcher becomes immersed during data collection and gains better understanding of people's lives. He looks for patterns in their lives, actions and words in the context of the complete case. The researcher has noted these when he listened to the words expressed by the participants during the interview session.

The researcher became engaged and gained better understanding of how the church involved itself in community developments, in helping orphans, widows, street children, and the homeless. They also help to attain the goal of enabling poor people to rise above their impoverished living conditions.

Heitink (1999:229) defines descriptive research as the method that focuses on a systematic description of a topic on the basis of the empirical data or information, while explorative research is a mixture of both research that seeks to describe and that which seeks to test a hypothesis, although this may have its own place when the researcher does not wish to explore the broader field or to register certain phenomenon, but attempts to explain these with a view of developing hypotheses on the basis of the findings. Explorative studies place the focus on explanation and interpretation.

In this research explorative research is done to find out what the view of Christians in the Reformed churches are in the resort of Synod Midlands concerning poverty alleviation, what they think should be done, and what they are doing to help fight poverty inside and outside the church.

In this empirical study, individuals were interviewed while the author was writing all the necessary information down. Three churches were identified where these interviews took place. Two ministers, one elder, one deacon, and two church members from Tshiawelo Reformed Church; one minister from Tlokwe-Bophirima; one minister from Diepkloof; and a minister, two elders and two deacons from Boskop were interviewed. This brings the number of people interviewed to 12 individuals.

4.2 Work plan

The information gathered from the interviews was first written down as it was received. After this a summary, basically consisting of the findings, was made. These findings will be divided in to positive and negative findings. Positive findings refers to things that are already being done positively with regard to poverty, while the negative findings indicate things that the interviewees still have in mind to do, or which they suggest to the church, but which are not yet practiced in these specific churches.

All the questions were asked to all the interviewees. There were no specific people to answer specific questions. The response of all the interviewed individuals differ from one church to another, and the detailed description of the findings will be given according to all the individuals. *Minister A, B, C, D, E, elder F, G, H, deacon I and J, member K and L.*

4.3 The questionnaire

4.3.1 According to your knowledge, does the Bible teach anything regarding poverty? Motivate your answer.

4.3.2 How is your church contributing in helping to eradicate poverty?

4.3.3 What is the role of your church with regard to taking care of orphans, widows, street children and to all the people you encounter in everyday lives who are poor and who need the voice and the hand of God through the church?

The attitude: love and compassion

4.3.4 What is your attitude towards orphans, widows, the homeless and the street children? Motivate your answer

4.3.5 God says that we must love our neighbours as we love ourselves, how do you help your neighbour who is in need? Explain how do you love and help your neighbour who is poor.

The responsibility of the leaders of the church- e.g. deacons and elders

4.3.6 How are deacons helping the poor outside and inside the church?

4.3.7 What are they doing to equip church members to fight poverty?

4.3.8 What is the church's contribution to the community developments in your area?

4.4 Open eye and heart for the poor

Minister A Elder F said that God is not against poverty, because through poverty

He wants to teach people to have an eye and heart for the poor. God gives to people, and they have in abundance to provide to those who do not have. *Minister A* said that God wants even the church to be involved in helping those who are affected by poverty. He uses the church to spread the message of hope and love through practical actions of love, that is, when poor people are helped, they see God's love. *Minister B and D* said that the church must start at home, and the calling of the church is to provide for the needy. The church must reflect the kingdom of God in this world by showing love to all the people. *Minister C*, said that the Bible teaches both positive and negative things about poverty.

Minister D says that individuals must start in their families and then go out to help those who are inside the church and also in the community at large. *Minister D and B* said that their congregations contribute to eradicating poverty through diaconal funds or help that help in buying food for the needy. The church itself does not take care of orphans on its own. Members of the church are taught what they should do to help the orphans, to care for their needs, and they are also taught to establish the responsibility of the immediate family. In other words they see to it that the church share responsibility with the members of the community as well as with the members of the church. *Minister E* said that God is not against poverty, as He uses His church to spread the message of hope to the people. God commanded Christians to love their fellow neighbours. In the church where *Minister E* is serving, they comfort and encourage the poor not to lose hope, they also provide blankets and old clothes. Again they identify orphans among those in the community who are seriously in desperate need, those who need love and care. The church takes care of them, because they are also children of God. *Elder H*, also agrees with the idea that God is not against

poverty because He uses His church to provide for the needs of others. *Minister E* said that they also help in comforting families when there is a funeral. After the funeral they continue to have constant follow-up to develop a close relationship. *Elder H* said that they have a diaconal office in their church that helps children who are in need of school funds. They also organised give support to the Hospice in *Ikageng* this year. They are ready to give material and spiritual support to the orphans. *Minister A* said that the helping of orphans, widows, and street children is not up to standard or to where God wants it to be. Although there are some programs that were planned to address some of the needs, there are job seeking and creation programs. They use funds from regular contributions and from the main account of the church (budget from the finance committee), relieving programs for the needy people, and the bursary committee. *Elder G* said that God is against poverty, because that is why the first Christian church cared for the poor (this is clear when one reads in the book of Acts). *Elder G* said that in their church they have established a job creation committee that helps in the process of poverty eradication. He also said that at the moment they don't have a program to care for orphans and street children. Therefore there is still a need to identify needy people inside the church before they go and help those who are outside the church. *Deacon I* said that God is against poverty, because He provided us with skills to help ourselves. However, in cases where people in their church need something, someone informs the office of deacons who will help with those needs. They offer transport, they provide old clothes to those who have need, and they pay doctor's fees for the sick who cannot afford to pay for themselves. *Deacon I* said that church members must be guardians to take care and look after orphans. In the church many people are working, though not earning enough money. Some are helped with social grants from the

government. The church sometimes provides piece jobs for the church members, and the church pays those who worked. *Deacon I* said that nothing is done to help street children. *Member K* said that God is against poverty and he gave a scriptural verse (Luke 18:23), and *Member L* also said that God is against poverty (Luke 18 and 2 Corinthians 8:1 ff).

4.4.1 Deduced findings

4.4.1.1 Positive

God and poverty:

- Some say that God is against poverty and some says that God is not against it.
- Christians teach members to have a heart for the poor.

Practical actions of love:

- Christians do provide food, clothes, money for food, and blankets.
- Churches comfort and encourage the poor.
- Diaconal offices are helping with transport
- One church has a job creation committee.

4.4.1.2 Negative

- Churches do not take care of orphans on its own
- The helping of widows, orphans and street children is not up to standard
- Nothing has been done to help street children

4.5 The attitude: love and compassion

Minister A said that the church cares for the needy, though it is not up to standard. Individuals also take responsibility. *Minister A* said that he motivates church members to care for others through sermons and home visits, and he motivates the church to tithe and contribute more in Sunday collections. In the 2004 budget it is clear that there are at least some funds to help a few, like *Takalani Hayani's* children's home. *Minister D* said that the church is now concentrating inside the church, but as time goes on they will focus their attention in helping even in the community. *Minister E*, said that little has been done to care for street children. They show love to their neighbours by helping them in such a way that the individuals can help themselves in future. They also provide food, clothes, and water. *Minister E* also helps in providing information about job opportunities.

Elder F said that they are intending to help or support one hospice (where Aids orphans are cared for) around the boundaries of their church. *Minister B and C* said that as an individual help other families with food, when there is a sick person who must be taken to the hospital, he see to it that he help the family without expecting them to pay money for petrol. He also suggested that sometimes people can also provide job opportunity by asking one person to work in his garden, and at the end of the day that person will get money to buy food.

Elder F also said that they let their church members to give them their academic records so that whenever they hear about job opportunities they contact them. Since their church is composed of many illiterate members, they urge parents to encourage their children to go to school so that tomorrow they bet bright future.

They urge church members to start small businesses that can make them to earn an extra income. *Elder G* said that he feel piety for the poor people. He helps people in terms of looking for jobs. He does not hide information, and he tries to use information at his disposal to help other people. *Elder H* said that his attitude towards the poor is that they must be supported both financially or materially and spiritually. The Bible teaches the church to look after the poor. As an individual *Elder H* said that he help with what he have only if he has such help and he also encourages people to look for jobs, and if there is a need that requires him, he involves himself in looking for job opportunities. He also helps farm workers to open bank accounts in order to save money for the family and for the education of their children.

Deacon I said that church has a plan to help in hospice, although nothing has been done to help the orphans. He also help people, especially the youth about bursaries and some information concerning tertiary institutions, and sometimes *Deacon I* help with money for transport if it is a price that he can afford. *Deacon J* said that poor people must help the poor with food and clothes. He also said that as an individual he has the responsibility to look after the poor, that is, loving my neighbour as I do to myself. *Member K* said that we must love orphans, widows and street children, because they are God's people. And one can show his love to his neighbour by sharing his possessions. *Member L* said that he feel sorry because most of them is not their fault that made them to be in such situations. If he knows that his neighbour is in need of money to attend a conference he helps him with that.

4.5.1 Findings deduced

4.5.1.1 Positive

- The majority of churches have love and compassion for the poor
- Church members are motivated to take care of the poor through sermons and home visitation
- Churches are involved to help search for job opportunities and provide information on jobs. Church members give academic records to find jobs for them.
- Churches urge church members to start small businesses.
- Church leaders help farm workers to open bank accounts
- Some church members help poor people with money for the conference

4.5.1.2 Negative

- Many churches are intending to help the poor orphans, Aids orphans, but they did not do it already.
- The churches' care for the needy is not up to standard
- The church has a plan to help in hospice, but nothing has been done to help the orphans.

4.6 The responsibility of the leaders of the church- e.g. deacons and elders

Minister A said that they introduce conferences of different committees, if there is any job opportunity the church announces it after the church service, they also

have strategic planning that help them to plan for some activities to help the poor people. *Minister A and B* said that, not much has been done up to so far to help in community developments. *Minister B* said that although they don't have enough funds they want to help inside and outside the church through the diaconal funds. *Minister C* said that they teach church members to start their own small businesses, creating jobs and announcing to the church if there are any employment opportunities. Members of the church are encouraged to care for each other and their neighbours as part of God's command and our responsibility. Material needs of people being poor must be provided. Teaching positively and negatively about poverty is part of the role of the church. *Minister C*; said that the needs of the helplessness inside the church are cared for. *Minister C*; *Member O* said that people are equipped in conferences for job creation in the church. *Minister D* said that deacons must serve inside and outside the church, although they have not yet started helping outside the church. The youth must be taught to be self-employed.

Minister E said that the church leaders identify the kind of help that is needed to support the poor. To equip church members they hold workshops in order to help the members to fight poverty. *Minister E* contributes in giving information to the community concerning basic health issues, addresses unemployment problem, providing skills. *Elder F* said that Church members are equipped on how to fight poverty through conferences for job creation, announcement when there is a need, that is, when someone is in need of help the leaders announce that to the church to contribute or help their church member, there is also a strategic planning document that help in equipping members of the church to help themselves. In community developments, the church has not done that much at

the present moment. *Elder G and Member L* said that there is no particular program to help both the poor inside and outside the church. They equip church members through job creation committee. In the involvement of the church in community developments he said that, there was a program where one of their pastors was involved in HIV/AIDS awareness, where he was also a member of the team. Member L also said that there are conferences of creating jobs for those who are not working. *Elder H* said that, since their church is situated in the farming area, he encourage the parents who have children to go to school, so that there can be a permanent eradication of poverty.

Deacon I said that he inform the youth on how they can be successful in their careers. He also helps them on how to make a budget. The church has done nothing at the present moment to contribute in community developments. *Deacon J* said that the church looks after all the people inside and outside the church. They are calling people to use money from the church to start small businesses. They involved themselves in the community developments by spreading the good news to the people. *Member K* said that they identify those who have needs and distribute according to their needs if there are resources available in the church. They also help in the spreading of the good news, they also help the Non-Governmental Organisations like Soutpansberg Community Development Organisation (SCDO). *Member L* said that he is never saw such help of the poor outside the church being cared for in his church. Nothing has been done in the community developments in which Member A attends church services.

4.6.1 Deduced findings

4.6.1.1 Positive findings

- Church leaders are helping church members by teaching them to start small business.
- One church does have a job seeking committee that helps its members in seeking jobs.
- There is job creation committee in the church
- In some of the churches Conferences on job creation are held to equip members of the church
- In one of the church they hold strategic planning seminar at the end of the year.
- One church is involved in helping an organisation that helps in poverty alleviation e.g. SCDO.
- Diaconal is used to help to fund people who want to start their own small businesses or projects, e.g. some members can start a “spaza” shop
- Parents are encouraged by the church leaders to help their children to go to school.

4.6.1.2 Negative findings

- The churches in contributing to the community development have done little or nothing at all.
- Church leaders are not part of the committees that are running community projects to ensure that there is faithfulness in the use of funds.

4.7 The church members- active help

Minister A said that they are helping church members when there is funeral. Every month each member of the church who is working contributes R5, and when one of the relative of his or her church member passes away, the church contribute R500-00. *Minister B* said that there is nothing that is done at the present moment in helping church members and the community. *Minister C* said that since members of the church are part of the community, developing them means developing the community at large. *Minister C* also said that there is a special committee that deals with unemployment in the church. The committee is trained on how to do well during the job interviews, to start their own small businesses, etc. *Minister C* says that he looks for jobs on behalf of the church members who are unemployed. *Minister D* said that they have not yet involved themselves in community developments.

Minister E said that they provide information on job opportunities. They give details where to get employment, inform people in the community, and their church council members become involved in projects like “*Iterele*” Project. They also get old clothes that they distribute to the poor. *Elder F* said that they let people give them their academic details so that whenever they hear about jobs, they may contact them. They help the parents to encourage their children to go to school. *Elder G* gives information and letting people to know about government programs (SETAS) that are giving people learner-ship. *Elder H* said that he encourages church members to go to labour department. He is not actively involved in community work, because he is still a student. *Deacon I*

informs youth about educational information. *Deacon J* said that they ask the job creation committee to ask the church if there are people who need piece job. *Member K* said that they introduce conferences for job creation, and they also help charity organisations like SCDO.

4.7.1 Deduced Findings

4.7.1.1 Positive findings

- One of the churches help with some contributions when their member lost his or her loved one
- Ministers and their church councils are helping in seeking jobs for those who have completed their studies
- There is a special committee that deals with the problem of unemployment in churches although not in all the churches.
- The committee for job seeking read advertisements for jobs on magazines, newspapers and in government gazettes, etc.

4.7.1.2 Negative findings

- Some churches have not yet involved themselves in the community developments.
- The churches are not fully involved in helping charity organisations that are helping poor people in the country.

4.8 Churches helping one another

Minister A said that they are not directly helping other churches, but they are helping in supporting the theological training of the theological students, they also join hands in doing mission with other churches like Diepkloof (teamwork).

Minister B said that because of the high rate of unemployment they are failing to help other churches, but they are helping each other spiritually, and we also help other churches with the facilities like church buildings. The church in which

Minister C is serving is also supporting the training of the theological students, because all the students and those who are already in the ministry will eradicate poverty in those churches in the near future. Nothing more is being done in helping the poor churches at the present moment. When people are being helped, they have a good attitude since they are taught to deal with it. They praise God in their poverty as well, though few will regard it as a curse from God.

Minister E said that they share information on how they do things, e.g. what are the contributing factors to their success, and how they address their failures and weak points.

On the question of churches helping one another, *Minister C* says that they are helping some structures like SCDO (Soutpansberg Community Development Organisation) that was formerly for relief programs. They help other churches by sending a team to do mission work. Teamwork is encouraged in this regard, whereby they help in Diepkloof and Dobsonville. They are not really supporting other churches financially, although they are helping one children's home, which was started by the church. They help it financially.

Minister D said that they try to help few churches when they are requested to do so. They help financially if they have a request from the church council concerned. They also help not only with material things, but they help when there are problems in other churches, they help in conducting church services in churches that do not have ministers of their own. That is, they help spiritually those churches that are in need of spiritual advice or help. *Elder G* said that there is no specific church that they are helping financially. *Elder H* said that the church is situated in the farm area, great % or almost all the members are poor, so at this moment they are unable to help other churches. *Deacon I* said that he is not well informed on the issue, because since he became a deacon, is like his church never helps any other church. *Deacon J* said that they help a church that have requested them to help, that is, special collection is made specifically for that. *Member K* said that their church help with advice to other churches on how to fight poverty. *Member L* said that their church is helping with money.

4.8.1 Findings deduced

4.8.1.1 Positive findings

- Some churches support others when there is a request of financial aid
- Churches are supporting theological training of students as it is their responsibility according to article 19 of the church order
- Some churches help each other in doing mission work
- One of the churches is supporting one children's home and an organisation that deals with poverty alleviation (SCDO)

4.8.1.2 Negative

- Churches are supporting other churches financially, and little is done in some churches to support other churches except when they are requested to do so
- Many churches are poor and cannot support other churches
- Theological students are not supported fully by their churches because some of the churches are not contributing at all
- In some churches little or nothing is done to support the poor churches

4.9 The attitude of the poor

Minister A said that the attitude of the poor people who are helped, they respond by coming to church. Those who are helped when they have funeral, they respond by coming to church. *Minister C* *Minister D* said that during house visits one sees that people develop love for the church, and they become dedicated members of the church. *Minister E* said that the poor are delighted and always thankful to God who uses the church to provide for their needs. They become devoted Christians, who do not give up. *Elder F* says that most of them appreciate the help while others take the advantage and want to use the church as a funeral scheme or society. *Minister D* said that if the church helps the poor, they see God's love through the help they received in the church. Some of the people helped, if they are not believers, they become members of the church. And when they are inside the church they become actively involved in such a way that they even contribute or participate in giving so that they can also help

other people who are in need. Elder G said that churches members who are helped they are happy and satisfied.

4.9.1 Deduced findings

4.9.1.1 Positive

- Poor church members are strengthened and learn to help others when they have things.
- Poor people when they have they involve themselves in helping the poor inside and outside the churches (some when they finished their studies, they help others by paying their school fees).

4.9.1.2 Negative

- Poor people are not fully helped and cannot see the hand and love of the God through the church
- Poor people will have to appreciate the love the church is showing them
- They have to praise God for what He is doing to them through His church

4.10 Final conclusion on empirical report.

4.10.1 Positive aspects:

- God and poverty: God command Christians to provide basic needs like

food, clothes, money, and blankets for the poor, and other churches are involved in creating job, providing transport to help the sick people.

- Church members are motivated to have love and compassion for the poor. Christians are motivated through sermons and also during house visitations. Other churches also involved themselves in seeking jobs for the unemployed by providing information concerning job opportunities. The job creation committee also search for information in newspapers, magazines, and government gazettes.
- Church leaders help their poor church members to start small businesses, and conferences are held to equip church members on how to start projects. The church also helps an organisation that helps in alleviating poverty.
- One church helps with some contributions when their member lost his or her loved one.
- Some churches support others when there is a request of financial aid. Some churches are supporting theological seminary that trains the future ministers.
- When poor people become successful in their lives, they involve themselves in helping the poor inside and outside the churches.

4.10.2 Negative aspects

- Some churches do not take care of orphans, and in some churches the helping of widows, orphans and street children is not up to standard.
- Some churches are intending to help the poor orphans, but they have not

yet done that already.

- Churches have done little or nothing in community developments, including church leaders who are not in the running of projects. Churches have done little or nothing to support charity organisations.
- Churches in the resort of Synod Midlands do little to support other churches.
- Poor people are not supported up to satisfactory up to this point in time

CHAPTER 5

PRAXIS: PRACTICAL THEORETICAL THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE IN ALLEVIATING POVERTY IN THE CHURCHES THAT ARE IN THE CHURCHES THAT ARE IN THE SYNOD MIDLANDS

5. Introduction

The problem statement in this practice theory is about what pastoral and strategic guidelines can be given to churches in Synod Midlands to become involved in fighting poverty or alleviating poverty?

The objective of practice theory is to find pastoral and strategic guidelines for the churches in Synod Midlands on how they can involve themselves in alleviating poverty.

The method that will be used in the practical-theoretical part will be an interaction between basis-theory and meta-theory. In this practical study strategic guidelines will be formulated on how Synod Midlands can become involved in the actions to fight poverty or in alleviating poverty.

5.2 Work plan

One will have to combine the basic theoretical principles from the basis theory

and the meta-theory, and the empirical study. At the end of this chapter there will be the final guidelines in alleviating poverty in the churches that are in the churches that are in the Synod Midlands.

5.3 Basis theoretical principles and Meta theoretical perspectives from chapter 2, 3 and 4 and guidelines for a practice theoretical theory

There are four main principles for alleviating poverty that are mentioned in Chapter 2. The following are the basic principles from Old Testament and the New Testament on poverty alleviation:

5.3.1 Basis theoretical principles on God and poverty

Through out the Old Testament God commanded all people to look after the needs of the poor. God is revealed as one who does not want His people to suffer because of poverty. He is on the side of both the rich and the poor, but he needs the rich to care for the poor. This command is embraced in the love He commanded His people to love Him, and to love others as they love themselves (Deuteronomy 6:4-7). God also emphasised this command in the New Testament where Christians are commanded to love their neighbours as they love themselves. The acts of love include caring for the poor by providing food, clothes, and shelter. In the New Testament Jesus Christ's attitude towards the poor was that He felt pity for the poor and he provided for their needs. He provided food for the 5000 people who were listening to His preaching. The

church is taught that it must follow Christ's example.

5.3.2 Perspectives from the meta-theory on God and poverty

God as the creator of all things, He commands his church to look after the poor and the hungry. The church's involvement in organisations, the government in their efforts to alleviate poverty can do this. The church of God can create a concrete relationship with the other stakeholders.

5.3.3 Findings from the empirical study on God and poverty

God teaches Christians responsibility to care and look after the needy. He wants His people to have an open eye and heart for the poor by giving them what they need. His people can provide clothes for the poor people. Christians can distribute food to the orphans, widows and street children. Christians can follow Christ's example to feel pity and provide food to the people in the church and also in the community.

5.3.4 Guidelines for a practice theory on God and poverty

- Christians have to provide food to the poor
- Christians have to provide clothes as practical acts of love to the poor people
- Local churches have to provide food to orphans who are members of the church and those who are not members of the church.

- Local churches have to start home based care for poor people.

5.4.1 Basis theoretical principles on leaders of the church and the people and poverty

Leaders are commanded to help the poor and the needy and to defend them from oppression. The ministers of the church should warn the oppressors not to exploit the poor and the needy. This means that even leaders were not excluded in the command to look after the poor and to protect them from injustice; however, the servants of God told them that they must not exploit the poor. Leaders today are to help those who have needs and they are to protect them from injustice. Church leaders are also commanded to love and care for the needy inside and outside the church. They can also provide food, clothes, and shelter for the poor people. God also commands people to help strangers with food, water, and other basic needs. Leaders can be involved in Jesus' acts of helping the poor and carry on the work. Collections can be made that will help poor people and poor congregations. Leaders of the churches can initiate this with the view of helping the churches that have needs. The church can be a giving church, and the church leaders are to lead in the forefront.

5.4.2 Perspectives from the meta-theory on leaders of people and poverty

Church leaders are to be involved in the running of community projects, to ensure that there is no unfaithfulness concerning the use of funds. Church leaders can also be involved in the civil structures and other community

development organisations that aim in helping to alleviate or fight poverty. The church leaders on their own cannot eradicate poverty, but the leaders of the church are to join hands with the community leaders and the community at large in the process of fighting poverty.

5.4.3 Findings from the empirical study on leaders of people and the church poverty

Church leaders are in some cases busy to help in poverty alleviation through teaching them how to start small business. Church leaders are to initiate the creation of jobs, like full time secretary of the church, gardener, etc. Churches leaders can have job-seeking committee that helps its members in seeking jobs. In local churches there can also be job creation committee that deals with projects that are implemented inside the church and also in the community. Leaders can be from both the church and the community at large. Conferences for job creation are held to equip members of the church on how to find jobs, how to create jobs, how to get funds to start small business, etc. Church leaders and leaders of the community can have meetings to strategise the community developments. And church leaders themselves can have their own strategic planning focusing on how they can alleviate poverty inside and outside the church. Church leaders are to involve themselves in projects that are implemented in the communities. Church leaders can be in the committees that are running community projects to ensure that there is faithfulness in the use of funds. Diaconal funds can be used to help in funding people who want to start their own small businesses or projects. Church leaders and community leaders are to encourage parents to help their children to go to school, so that they can at

the end of the day be educated.

5.4.5 Guidelines for the practice theory on leaders of the church and the poor

- Church leaders have the duty to teach people not to oppress the poor people.
- Ministers have to protect the poor people from injustice
- They also have vital duty to provide the poor with food, transport, shelter, and to pay for school fees for the disadvantaged poor children.
- Christian leaders have to guide their church members to provide food and shelter to strangers.

5.5.1 Basis theoretical principles on the people and poverty

People who live with the poor can also care for them. They can see to it that the needs of the poor are met. That is, they can buy food, clothes for the poor people. They can play their role in the responsibility to look after orphans, widows and street children. They can share their possessions entrusted to them by God with the poor people and the hungry. Local churches can act as a communion of believers in the household of God who are guided by the Holy Spirit. Christians can share what they have with the poor people. This means that the rich people who have can share with the poor people who do not have basic needs in their lives. The church is to care and look after orphans, disabled, street children, and widows. People can also share the little of what they have with others who needs

basic needs for survival. The church can allow the Holy Spirit to take control in their acts of love to the needy and the hungry. Man was created to serve others in this world. That is man is a steward, he or she is a disciple and can be able to help in alleviating poverty in the community at large. Deacons are also called to serve because they are servants of the Lord in the church as well as in the community. They can play their role in the situation that is affected by poverty, seeing to it that the needs of the poor are met, although the poor people are not Christians, it is the duty of the church to look after them.

5.5.2 Perspectives from the meta-theory on the people and poverty

Individuals can contribute in helping the poor people. The rich people can also involve themselves in supporting the charity organisations and the NGO's that aim at poverty alleviation. Poverty is real and it is in the individuals, families, and community and in the churches. It is the responsibility of the individuals in families, communities and in the churches to see to it that poor people are helped.

5.5.3 Findings from the empirical study on the people and poverty

The individual church members of the community can use their effort to help in community developments. Ministers look for jobs and help those who have completed their studies. Some churches have a special committee that deals with the problem of unemployment. The church individuals can see to it that they initiate the process of seeking jobs inside the church as well as in the community.

The individuals have responsibility to look for jobs that are advertised in magazines, newspapers and in government gazettes, etc. The church members can help charity organisations that are helping poor people in the country.

5.5.4 Guidelines for a practice theory on people and poverty

- Christians have to share with the poor people their possessions.
- Ministers have to help in looking for jobs for the unemployed.
- Local churches have to help even people who are not members of their church. Loving one's neighbour involves even taking care of someone who hates you. He or she has to be given food to eat.
- Christians have to know their role as stewards, as disciples, and as deacons. They have to identify the help they can offer to the poor and hungry.
- Individuals have the duty to look for jobs in the newspapers, magazines and in government gazettes. They have to seek jobs for the unemployed and the poor people.
- Deacons will have to provide transport fees to the poor children who want to go to school. Students have to be provided with bursaries so that they can further their studies.
- Christians who are financially okay have to support the small businesses that are introduced by the poor people.

5.6.1 Basis theoretical principles on poor and poverty

The poor has responsibility to accept their situation that they are affected by poverty. They can be able to accept the help with thanksgiving in their hearts. The poor people can thank God who helped them through the community of believers and the community at large. They can use what they have in a responsible manner. If they are given money to start small business, they are to do that with a faithful heart. The poor people can also use their efforts in doing the work in order to alleviate poverty. They are not to be lazy to work in projects that are implemented in the church and in the community. Their involvement in this process can help in winning this battle against poverty.

5.6.2 Perspectives from the meta-theory on the poor and poverty

Poor people have full rights like any other person in the world. They are to be sure that in the poverty stricken world they will be cared for. The church is the hope for the broken world in this regard. Jobs created in the community are to be for the poor people. The priority of the church is to reach those who have needs. Street children are to accept that they must stay in homes that are built for them. Widows and orphans can also accept the help they receive from the church, government and also from charity organisations with thanksgiving in their hearts. The poor can be equipped educationally. Bursaries can be provided from the diaconal funds and other bursary accounts that are in the church and in the state.

5.6.3 Findings from the empirical study on the poor and poverty

People helped see the hand and love of God through the church and through the community. Poor people can appreciate the love the church is showing them, and at the end of the day when they are successful they will also be involved in helping others. They are to praise God for what He is doing to them through His church. Poor church members can be strengthened and learn to help others when they become successful in life. Poor people can also to be actively involved in developments that can help change their situations. The poor people can honour God and give Him thanks for what He did to them when they had a desperate need for finances, food, shelter, and protection.

5.6.4 Guidelines for a practice theory on the poor and poverty

- When the poor are helped with money to start a business, they have to ensure that they use that for the purpose they have been given for, that is, they must be faithful.
- Poor people who become successful in their lives must be able to support others who are in need.
- They have to honour God and give Him thanks for what He did to them when they had a desperate need for finances, food, shelter, and protection.
- Ministers during home visits have to enrich the poor people with the words of comfort and encouragement. They have to be equipped educationally through bursaries from the diaconal funds and other

bursary schemes.

5.7 FINAL PRACTICAL THEORETICAL GUIDELINES IN ALLEVIATING POVERTY IN THE CHURCHES THAT ARE IN THE CHURCHES THAT ARE IN THE SYNOD MIDLANDS

- God and the poor: God of love throughout His Word, He commanded His children to care for the needs of the poor. We sensitive towards the poor. They must give clothes, food and shelter to the poor
- Leaders and poverty: Community leaders, church leaders and the state must be involved in finding ways to alleviate poverty. They must create jobs, and provide charity funds, and providing diaconal help to the poor and the hungry.
- People and poverty: it is important that people as individuals must support poor people by providing basic needs like shelter, food, clothes and paying school funds. They have to provide blankets that are to be provided to the poor people.
- The poor and poverty: the poor people who are in the community must be actively involved in fighting poverty. When there are projects they have to be ready to do some work. They have to use funds provided to the poor to start small businesses. When the poor people become successful in life, they must be able to help those who have needs, so that they can also come to a standard whereby they can support themselves also. It is also the duty of the poor to see to it that they use the resources in a responsible manner.

CHAPTER 6

6.1 Introduction

The main problem statement of that was researched in this mini-dissertation was: What pastoral and strategic guidelines can be given to Reformed churches in Synod Midlands on the problem of alleviating poverty? The main aim of this study is to come up with Biblical strategic guidelines to alleviate poverty especially in the resort of Synod Midlands. One tries to find Biblical basis on poverty alleviation.

The model that deals with the basis-theory, meta-theory and praxis-theory as defined for Practical theology by Zerfass will be used in this regard (Heyns & Pieterse, 1990:35-36).

6.2 Work plan of the Study

To get the basis theoretical principles from Scripture it was done through historical-grammatical exegesis. Basis theoretical principles were destructed from this research. Meta-theoretical perspectives were found from sciences of Sociology. Through empirical research findings were made on the viewpoint of different members of Reformed Churches in the resort of Synod Midlands. Practice theoretical principles were found through hermeneutical interactions between the basis theoretical guidelines and the Meta theoretical findings, and practical guidelines were given.

6.3 The following conclusions were achieved in chapter 2 on basis theoretical principles:

- God is revealed as a God who handle both rich and poor equally and demand every person to have an open eye and heart for poor and needy persons
- The church must follow the attitude of Jesus to feel piety for the people in need and act in love and compassion towards people in need of food, a home and other problems
- The leaders of the church, especially the deacons, must defend and help the poor and lead the congregation to obey God in giving love to people in need.
- The members of the church must be involved in the needs of the poor people who live with them and take responsibility for widows and orphans.
- The church must act as a community of love under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and address~~e~~d as churches the need of poor people. In the community
- The poor must be thankful for the love of others and satisfied with the help they receive from the church.

6.4 In chapters 3 and 4 meta theoretical perspectives were done with the help of literature study and empirical research.

6.4.1 The following perspectives were reached in chapter 3:

- In this chapter the main emphasis is on the working together of stakeholders, because poverty alleviation involves organisations, churches, and the government.
- The church as the main focus should create this kind of relationship with the different stakeholders. That is, the church must strive to have good relationship with the government, organisations, NGO's and the community who must see to it that they are involved in community projects that are meant to alleviate poverty.
- Church leaders must ensure that they are involved in the running of community projects, seeing to it that there is no misuse of funds.
- The church on its own cannot manage to eradicate poverty, but its members with all the leaders of the community and the community at large should be involved in this process of fighting poverty.

6.4.2 The following findings were reached in chapter 4:

6.4.2.1 Positive aspects:

- God and poverty: God command Christians to provide basic needs like food, clothes, money, and blankets for the poor, and other churches are involved in creating job, providing transport to help the sick people.

- Church members are motivated to have love and compassion for the poor. Christians are motivated through sermons and also during house visitations. Other churches also involved themselves in seeking jobs for the unemployed by providing information concerning job opportunities. The job creation committee also search for information in newspapers, magazines, and government gazettes.
- Church leaders help their poor church members to start small businesses, and conferences are held to equip church members on how to start projects. The church also helps an organisation that helps in alleviating poverty.
- One church helps with some contributions when their member lost his or her loved one.
- Some churches support others when there is a request of financial aid. Some churches are supporting theological seminary that trains the future ministers.
- When poor people become successful in their lives, they involve themselves in helping the poor inside and outside the churches.

6.4.2.2 Negative aspects:

- Some churches do not take care of orphans, and in some churches the helping of widows, orphans and street children is not up to standard.
- Some churches are intending to help the poor orphans, but they have not yet done that already.
- Churches have done little or nothing in community developments, including church leaders who are not in the running of projects. Churches

have done little or nothing to support charity organisations.

- Churches in the resort of Synod Midlands do little to support other churches.
- Poor people are not supported up to satisfactory up to this point in time

6.5 In chapter 5 practice theoretical guidelines were given on alleviating poverty in the churches that are in the Synod Midlands:

- God and the poor: God of love throughout His Word, He commanded His children to care for the needs of the poor. We must be sensitive towards the poor. We must give clothes, food and shelter to the poor
- Leaders and poverty: Community leaders, church leaders and the state must be involved in finding ways to alleviate poverty. They must create jobs, and provide charity funds, and providing diaconal help to the poor and the hungry.
- People and poverty: it is important that people as individuals must support poor people by providing basic needs like shelter, food, clothes and paying school funds. They have to provide blankets that are to be provided to the poor people.
- The poor and poverty: the poor people who are in the community must be actively involved in fighting poverty. When there are projects they have to be ready to do some work. They have to use funds provided to the poor to start small businesses. When the poor people become successful in life, they must be able to help those who have needs, so that they can also come to a standard whereby they can support themselves also. It is also

the duty of the poor to see to it that they use the resources in a responsible manner.

6.6 Final Conclusion

Principles are vitally important in order to know how to alleviate poverty in the churches that are in Synod Midlands. In this regard all the principles that we have must be from Scripture, i.e. information from Sociology must be measured with the measure stick of Christianity. The Scripture is the foundation of all our principles that are necessary in alleviating poverty. Though it is clear that little has been done to help in alleviating poverty, the Bible has the basic principle of love that covers and is the overrule of all the principle to all the people. There are social principles that are followed in societies depending on the place and the people in that area. There is an immediate calling for the churches to hasten the process of alleviating poverty in rural areas, farms, and also in black townships. If the guidelines that are given can be followed, the church will be able to reflect God's Kingdom in the world. There will be joy to the poor, orphans, widows and street children. Church leaders, community leaders and the state can make a difference by joining hands in a fight and alleviating poverty.

6.7 Recommendations for further study

1. Paul and poverty
2. The relation between the church and the NGO's in alleviating poverty.
3. Empirical study on the involvement of the churches in Community

developments.

Abstract

Poverty in South Africa and Africa as a whole has become a major problem, hindering the development of the entire continent. The problem of poverty affects all the spheres of life. People affected by poverty do not enjoy life to such an extent that they can feel counted among the blessed in the country. They feel depressed about their situation and strive to find solutions for their problem. One of the major causes of poverty in South Africa and in Africa as a whole is inequality and injustice. That is, the poor become poorer while the rich become richer. Poverty as one of the major problems we have inside and outside the church, needs serious attention.

Chapter 2 consist of the following principles: Firstly, God is revealed as a God who treats both rich and poor equally and demands every person to have an open eye and heart for poor and needy. Secondly, the church must follow the attitude of Jesus, feeling empathy for people in need and acting in love and compassion towards them. Thirdly, the leaders of the church, especially the deacons, must defend and help the poor and lead the congregation to obey God in loving to people in need. Fourthly, the members of the church must be involved in the needs of the poor amongst them and take responsibility for widows and orphans. Fifth, the church must act as a community of love under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and address the need of the poor. Sixth, the poor must be thankful for the love of others and satisfied with the help they receive from the church. The principles were identifie after studying the Scriptural portions in the Old Testament (Leviticus 19: 9 and 10; Deuteronomy 15:4; Proverbs 22:9; Proverbs 6:9-11, Jeremiah 22:16; Ezekiel 16:49, Ezekiel 22:29)

and the New Testament (Matthew 25:31-46; Luke 9:14-17; Acts 2:42-47; and James 2:14-17).

Chapter 3 consists of a literature study, with an emphasis on Sociology. Different stakeholders are involved in alleviating poverty, although not yet on a satisfactory standard. There is still a need for the stakeholders and the church to be more actively involved in alleviating poverty. Orphans, widows and street children are not cared for enough or at all in some instances.

Chapter 4 provides some practical theoretical perspectives to try and change this situation. The principles stated in this chapter should be seriously considered. In this case God's love towards the needy and the poor is very important.

Chapter 5 is the practical theoretical theological perspective on alleviating poverty in the churches in the Synod Midlands.

Chapter 6 offers some conclusive guidelines. If the guidelines in this chapter can be taken in to consideration and taken seriously, they can ensure a better way to alleviate poverty inside and outside the church.

Opsomming

Armoede in Suid-Afrika en Afrika as geheel het 'n groots probleem geword, wat die ontwikkeling van die hele kontinent verhinder. Die probleem van armoede beïnvloed alle lewenssfere. Mense wat deur armoede geafekteer word, geniet nie die lewe in so 'n mate dat hulle hulself as van die geseëndes in die land ag nie. Hulle voel bedruk oor hulle omstandighede en strewe daarna om 'n oplossing vir die probleem te vind. Een van die grootste oorsake van armoede in Suid-Afrika en Afrika is ongelukheid en ongeregtheid. Die armes word armer terwyl die rykes ryker word. Armoede, as een van die grootste probleme binne en buite die kerk, het ernstige aandag nodig.

Hoofstuk twee belig die volgende beginsels: Eerstens word God geopenbaar as 'n God wat beide ryk en arm gelyk behandel en wat alle mense beveel om 'n oop hart en hand teenoor armes en behoeftiges te hê. Tweedens moet die kerk die houding van Jesus openbaar en empaties, liefdevol en meelewend teenoor armoediges en behoeftiges wees. Derdens moet die kerkleiers, veral die diakens, die armes help en verdedig en die gemeente lei om gehoorsaam aan God te wees deur behoeftiges lief te hê. Vierdiens moet die gemeentelide betrokke wees by die behoeftes van die armoediges onder hulle en verantwoordelikheid neem vir die weduwees en weeskinders. Vyfdens moet die kerk optree as 'n liefdesgemeenskap onder die leiding van die Heilige Gees en die behoeftes van die armes aanspreek. In die sesde plek moet armoediges dankbaar wees vir ander se liefde en tevrede wees met die hulp wat hulle van die kerk ontvang. Hierdie beginsels is geïdentifiseer na analise van teksgedeeltes uit die Ou Testament (Levitikus 9:9 en 10; Deuteronomium 15:4;

Spreuke 22:9; Spreuke 6:9-11, Jeremia 22:16; Esegel 16:49, Esegel 22:29) en die Nuwe Testament (Matteus 25:31-46; Lukas 9:14-17; Handeling 2:42-47; en Jakobus 2:14-17).

Hoofstuk 3 bestaan uit 'n literatuurstudie met die fokus op Sosiologie. Verskillende rolspelers is betrokke by armoede verligting, maar nog nie op 'n bevredigende vlak nie. Daar is steeds nood daaraan dat die rolspelers en die kerk meer aktief betrokke moet raak in armoede verligting. Weeskinders, weduwees en straatkinders is nog nie voldoende versorg nie, en in sommige gevalle glad nie.

Hoofstuk 4 verskaf praktiese teoretiese perspektiewe om hierdie situasie te probeer verander. Die beginsels wat in hierdie hoofstuk genoem word moet ernstig oorweeg word. In hierdie geval is God se liefde vir die armoediges en behoeftiges baie belangrik.

Hoofstuk 5 is die praktiese teoretiese teologiese perspektiewe op die verligting van armoede in die kerke binne die Middelande Sinode.

Hoofstuk 6 bied gevolgtrekkende riglyne. As hierdie riglyne in die hoofstuk ernstig oorweeg kan word, kan dit verseker dat armoede beter verlig word binne en buite die kerk.

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