



OPINION PIECE

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New Zealand is presently faced with the worst poverty statistics we have ever experienced. It is estimated that 682,500 are presently living in poverty in this country. That equates to one in seven households. Take a look right now at your own street...could every seventh house actually be in poverty behind those closed doors? To make matters worse, one in every four kids now live in poverty. That is a quarter of our upcoming generation, in poverty – that does not bode well for us as a nation.

The most vulnerable groups to experience poverty more than all others are Beneficiaries, Children, Maori, Pacific Peoples, and Solo Parents.

It presently costs our government approximately \$1 million a week to house homeless in Motels. Not to mention all the other costs poverty is inflicting on taxpayers across health, education, social services, housing, and more.

We have now seen the 'working poor' emerge as a most unfortunate group of individuals. These are households busting their butts to try and stay afloat, living paycheque to paycheque, but sinking under the weight of financial pressure. Statistics released this week state that there are now 50,000 'in-work' households in poverty.

Poverty is so powerful it can disempower whole communities and countries economically, socially, mentally, relationally and spiritually.

Poverty inflicts the mind with a mental disease, causing despair, despondency and disconnection. Is it any coincidence that as poverty has skyrocketed across this country, so too has suicide?

Despite the attempts of successive and desperate governments to stem poverty's rampant onslaught by throwing more and more money at the problem, these efforts have been futile. Our once fresh-faced and optimistic Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern was eager to undertake the portfolio of Child Poverty Minister, only to discover it's a lemon, with a formidable task. She is now reduced to excuses such as 'it will take a long time to turn this around'. Unfortunately, no government has ever looked beyond three years, and in desperation they announce yet more money to flippantly throw at the problem. How many of us instinctively know that money is not really the true answer to poverty? An Individual can win lotto tomorrow, but if they are ill-equipped to handle more money, you can be sure it will be gone in next to no time.

Fundamentally there is a poverty mindset that needs to change in individuals, families and communities, in order that poverty can be properly eradicated. This is no simple feat when poverty is often entrenched through generational transfer, sadly passed down through the bloodlines as some sort of twisted inheritance.



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The good news is, we can offer a solution. Through our free, proven and successful ManUp, Legacy and associated programmes we are getting incredible results. We are quick to help individuals with immediate practical needs such as food, housing, clothing and more, yet we don't just alleviate poverty's symptoms, we remove the poverty mindset right out of the individual. We also deal with the more important internal needs – providing an interruption in their bloodlines. We know that the only way poverty can be truly eradicated for good is through internal healing and a 'renewing of the mind'.

Once poverty is removed, they are no longer negatively dependent on the government, consuming billions of taxpayers' money on this social scourge. Positively, you also now have that individual becoming a productive contributor to society. They are now masters of their own destiny.

It is well known that Destiny Church effectively caters for all of these most vulnerable groups when it comes to poverty....Beneficiaries, Children, Maori, Pacific Peoples and Solo Parents.

It seems to defy all human-logic and many must scratch their heads trying to figure this out. These vulnerable people come into the church in poverty, but through the help of the church, it is not long before these individuals are lifted out of poverty, into a position of prosperity, then giving back within their communities. We re-socialize individuals with positive behavioural habits.

When we are regularly witnessing stories such as a young solo mother, with two children, on a modest income, now purchasing their first brand-new home in an inflated Auckland market. Or a family once debt-ridden now operating their own successful business. Or a once prolific gambler, now sort after in the corporate world as a model employee, it's hard to deny that Destiny Church certainly has a recipe that works.

In their confusion, media and poverty inflicted individuals will continue to spin the same old worn out lie that "I steal from the poor". Firstly, that does not even make sense – even the dopyest robber knows not to break into a poor man's house to steal. Secondly, individuals who may enter the church poor, certainly do not stay that way for too long if they stick around and apply the principles that we teach. Thirdly, not one credible individual has even come forward to say that I took money off them – simply because it's never occurred.

My mantra over 40 years of working with people has always been to Find a Need and Meet it, Find a Hurt and Heal it, Find an Empty Heart and Fill it with love!

I am excited about this new season Destiny Church embarks on as we pilot yet another new initiative beyond just our church members, to deal another lethal blow to poverty in our communities. We call this new elaborate initiative, 'Building Transformative Communities – A better tomorrow, today!'. We have currently chosen 70 of the most poverty stricken streets from across South Auckland, and appointed seventy of our best mentor couples from within our ManUp & Legacy programmes. Our initial assessments will include more in-depth data collection, producing detailed reports six months later, so that our progress will be clearly seen by all, tracking families throughout our programmes, until they exit poverty into a better life. With our many years of experience in turning lives around, I am confident we can eliminate poverty from even more families for good. If you are interested in supporting this initiative in any way, we would welcome your involvement and be happy to talk to you about it. Phone 0800 1MANUP.

This initiative will be rolled out over the country in the next four weeks. I'll endeavor to keep you updated periodically.

Transforming one house, one street, one community at a time.