



# CHURCH AMBASSADOR NETWORK OF MAINE

AN INITIATIVE OF THE CHRISTIAN EDUCATION LEAGUE

building relationships between the shepherds of God's Church and the shepherds of government

## Biblical Principles on Shalom: The True Opposite of Poverty

*"Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. I also saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared like a bride adorned for her husband. Then I heard a loud voice from the throne: Look, God's dwelling is with humanity, and he will live with them. They will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them and will be their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; grief, crying, and pain will be no more, because the previous things have passed away." Revelation 21:1-4*

### **Begin with the end in mind.**

With anything that we do, especially something as large as human services, it is important that we know where we are going, that we know our target. The goal of this white paper is to establish the end in mind for poverty.

### **Introduction**

In the Church Ambassador Network, a ministry of the Christian Education League, we hold to the teachings of the Bible that God created the world, and it was good. The world was created in perfect Shalom. People, God, and creation lived at peace with one another.

Shalom is a word and concept used in Old Testament Scriptures that is often translated "peace." But "shalom" actually encapsulates so much more than that. There really is no equivalent English word. The Hebrew concept of Shalom is more about wholeness, well-being, flourishing, hope, and justice. Shalom is the opposite of poverty. It is about spiritual, relational, physical, and mental thriving. It is being in a place of peace with God, yourself, others, and creation.

Shalom was lost when people sinned. Mankind was separated from God, no longer walking in peace with Him, creation, or each other. God would later offer Shalom through Emmanuel, God with us. Jesus offers Shalom through His redeeming sacrifice on the Cross for the payment of sins and the defeat of death through His resurrection. He reconciled our relationship with God, and He will return to restore all things, including all those relationships now marred by sin. Jesus was, is, and forever will be our source of Shalom.

### **What is poverty?**

Poverty is a result of a broken relationship. It is more about being under-connected than under-resourced. Material poverty is often about being disconnected from the social and economic systems that allow people to use their gifts to help themselves and others to flourish. If it were just about resources, we could simply give people those resources, and all problems would be solved.

### **What causes poverty?**

- 1. Crisis:** Often an unforeseen time of great difficulty, such as divorce, job loss, or natural disaster.
- 2. Individual choices:** When someone makes foolish, bad decisions that lead to poverty.
- 3. Oppression:** When someone holds back something they owe to someone else.

4. **Exploitation:** When someone takes more than what is owed to them.
5. **Lack of advocacy:** When someone's voice is not heard in society (orphan, widow, and foreigner).

### What is shalom?

Shalom is wholeness, well-being, flourishing, hope, peace, and justice. It is spiritual, relational, physical, and mental wholeness. It is peace with God, yourself, creation, and others.

### 5 Ways Shalom Occurs:

1. **Law:** A tool for Shalom through providing and protecting.
2. **Leadership:** A voice for Shalom. A leader in the community willing to be a voice for the voiceless.
3. **Identity:** A recognition that all humanity has been made to reflect God's image. All have dignity.
4. **Intergenerational Wisdom:** The passing down of knowledge and wisdom from generation to generation. The Book of Proverbs is an excellent example of this.
5. **Radical Hope:** The realization that all things will be redeemed and restored. Shalom will be real and tangible for all people, rich and poor alike.

### Shalom v Charity

Charity paradigm: Invites us to provide for others in moments of need.

Shalom paradigm: Invites us to partner with God in the renewal of all things.

Shalom goes beyond providing for the material need. It leads us to provide for the whole of the person. It leads us to practice Christ-like hospitality.

### Practical view of Shalom: a holistic view

#### What An Individual Needs to Flourish:

- Family life
- Physical health
- Relationship with God through Christ
- Social relationships
- Vocational/work life
- Mental health

#### What a Community Needs to Flourish:

- Business/Commerce
- Housing
- Education
- Social services
- Healthcare
- A Gospel-centered, Bible-teaching Church
- Safety/Security
- Connectedness to neighbors

### Scripture References

- **Old Testament:** Psalm 4:8, Psalm 85:8, Jeremiah 6:1-9, Isaiah 26:3, Isaiah 32:17, Isaiah 45:7
- **New Testament:** Galatians 3:10-13, Ephesians 2:11-22, Ephesians 6:15, Philippians 4:4-7, Colossians 1:19-20, Colossians 3:13-15