

POVERTY IS HORRIBLE...

FOR A LITTLE WHILE

The baby died in her arms.

Lisa had taken a trip to Haiti with her youth group. The 17-year-old was in the middle of a two-week mission trip to help the poor when, during the building of a home for a family, their baby died. Lisa had heard about starving children, but never had she imagined that starvation could be so terrible. Having never been hungry in her life, having never known anyone who was hungry, she felt guilty, selfish, sick to her stomach, and angry. Guilty because she had so much and had never helped anyone in need before. Angry because it wasn't fair for these people to have so little when Americans had so much.

With the lifeless baby in her arms, Lisa vowed to dedicate her life to relieving hunger wherever she could. Tears filled her eyes. She wanted to go home and scream to everyone how selfish they were. But now all she could do was cry.

It was a sad funeral, with only the youth group and the family present. The body of the infant was buried in a shallow grave. Lisa returned home determined to make a difference.

Three months later Lisa was Christmas shopping in a mall when she saw a young Haitian mother with her baby. She remembered the baby she had held during the summer—the baby who died. She remembered the emotional commitment she had made to help the poor—and she realized how quickly she had forgotten that commitment. Lisa had tried so hard when she came home...though everyone was sympathetic, nothing had changed. There was the annual family vacation, cheerleading camp, school shopping, and now it was three months later. Lisa wanted to do something, but what? Maybe next year she would go on the trip to Haiti again, if she didn't have a job.



"High school kids are so phony."

You go to a class or conference on racism or hunger, and kids sit around crying and saying how concerned they are. Then when class is over, you see the same kids making fun of some other kid and talking about all the stuff they "need." Oh, and the environment—yeah, they're big on recycling ... then they throw their trash wherever they feel like it. You should see our school. Kids say they're not going to be like their parents. But they already are. This generation is basically a bunch of spoiled, selfish, self-centered brats. We pretend to care about the world, but we really don't care about anything except money, clothes, friends, sex, music, and having a good time."

Claudia, 18, senior

The Stats

Children made up nearly half (48%) of the chronically poor in 1992 and 1993, living in families that stayed below the poverty line in every month of those years, the Census Bureau reported. And more than 8% of all American children were chronically poor during that time period.

Youthworker Update
October 1996

By the Book...

Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like.

James 1:22-24

1. Does Lisa have anything to feel guilty about?

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2. Are you sympathetic or critical of Lisa?

3. Have you ever been emotionally moved by poverty or extreme need—and later forgotten about it?

4. What was Lisa's responsibility after this experience? What should she have done?