

## **The Therapeutic Dimension of Christian Benevolence: Exploring the Link between Poverty Alleviation and Mental Well-Being in the Nigerian Church**

Adaramaja, Olatayo Abiodun<sup>1</sup>; Olatundun A. Oderinde<sup>2</sup>, Kehinde E. Obasola<sup>3</sup>

*Abstract— Poverty remains a persistent social reality in Nigeria, significantly affecting individuals' mental, physical, and spiritual well-being. Nigerian Christian benevolence has often focused on meeting physical needs. The Nigerian church has historically responded to poverty through various benevolent practices, including food distribution, skill acquisition schemes, educational sponsorship, and microfinance interventions. However, the therapeutic dimension of such Christian benevolence, particularly its capacity to contribute to mental well-being, remains underexplored within empirical and theological discourses. Thus, this paper investigates how Christian poverty alleviation practices within Nigerian churches improve the mental health of beneficiaries. Employing a qualitative methodology, the paper utilises analytical, critical, and expository methods of data interpretation. Drawing from testimonies of beneficiaries across selected churches in Lagos and supported by participant observation, the paper identifies reduced anxiety, renewed hope, an enhanced sense of belonging, and improved self-worth as common outcomes among recipients of church-based benevolence. Additionally, spiritual counselling and prayer provided during welfare activities often reduce feelings of isolation, hopelessness, and despair among recipients. The study concludes that Christian benevolence, while addressing physical poverty, plays a therapeutic role in supporting mental well-being in low-resource communities when it integrates economic support with spiritual and social care. The paper debunks secularistic arguments which claim that the church is insignificant in contemporary times. The paper advances the discourse on the nexus between religion and mental health in Africa and offers a model for faith-based poverty alleviation initiatives that meet material and psychological needs. This intersection is critical for scholars in practical theology, religious studies, and mental health, as well as policymakers engaging faith communities in poverty and mental health interventions.*

**Keywords:** Christian; benevolence; mental well-being; Poverty alleviation.

---

<sup>123</sup> Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago Iwoye, Ogun State, Nigeria,

© 2025 the Authors. This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC 4.0).

## INTRODUCTION

Poverty remains a persistent and complex reality within human society, a condition that Jesus himself acknowledged when he declared, “the poor you will always have with you” (Matthew 26:11). This statement underscores the enduring nature of poverty, reminding the Christian community that there will always be individuals who, despite their faith, continue to grapple with material deprivation. In Nigeria, poverty has led to widespread hopelessness, significantly affecting the mental health of many by pushing them into anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem. The situation is exacerbated by the current economic challenges facing the country, including inflation, a weakening currency, and unemployment, which have made it increasingly difficult for many Nigerians to meet their basic needs. In metropolitan cities like Lagos, rapid urbanisation and rising living costs have left many Christians struggling to feed themselves, pay rent, and secure livelihoods, further heightening their psychological distress even as they remain active participants in church life.

In response to this chronic nature of poverty, the Nigerian church has historically positioned itself as a sanctuary for the poor, engaging in various acts of charity to alleviate the hardships faced by the less privileged among its members and the wider community. These acts of benevolence include the distribution of food items, payment of school fees, provision of healthcare assistance, skills acquisition programmes, and microfinance initiatives designed to empower individuals economically. Through such interventions, churches aim to fulfil their biblical mandate to care for the needy while fostering communal solidarity within the body of Christ. These charitable activities have not only provided physical relief but have also demonstrated the church’s commitment to addressing the structural and immediate challenges posed by poverty within the Nigerian context.

Previous studies on Christian benevolence and poverty alleviation within the Nigerian Christian context have primarily explored the socio-economic impacts of church-led interventions, with limited focus on their therapeutic implications for mental well-being. For instance, Uchem and Onuh (2020) examined how church-based food distribution and microfinance schemes have contributed to economic empowerment and reduced vulnerability among urban poor populations. Similarly, Ayegboyin (2019) analysed the role of Christian social welfare in Nigeria, focusing on education sponsorship and skill acquisition initiatives in alleviating poverty, yet treating mental health benefits only peripherally as secondary outcomes of economic stability. Idowu (2017) investigated Pentecostal churches’ benevolent programmes, showing their effectiveness in meeting immediate physical needs and promoting social cohesion, but did not assess mental health metrics systematically. In a broader African perspective, Gaiya (2002) explored the rise of Christian benevolence in Nigeria’s economic crisis. Despite these insights, a clear empirical and theological examination of how Christian

benevolence in Nigeria therapeutically influences mental well-being while addressing poverty remains absent, creating a research gap this study seeks to address.

Thus, this paper investigates the therapeutic dimension of Christian benevolence within the Nigerian church; it explores how poverty alleviation practices contribute to the improvement of mental well-being among beneficiaries. By examining testimonies of recipients and drawing insights from theological perspectives and participant observations in selected Lagos churches, this study seeks to advance the discourse on the intersection of religion, poverty alleviation, and mental health in Africa. The rationale for this study lies in the need to highlight the church's ongoing relevance in addressing contemporary social challenges. In doing so, the paper contributes to practical theology by showcasing church's potential as a therapeutic community in the face of persistent poverty and rising socio-economic challenges.

## CONCEPTUAL ELUCIDATIONS

**Christian Benevolence:** Benevolence can be defined as the quality of showing kindness, goodwill, and well-mannered concern towards others, often linked with a sense of conjugal duty and responsibility within communal and relational settings. Closely related to compassion, benevolence finds expression in serving and caring for others, embodying positive attitudes not only towards oneself but also towards others and humanity at large. It encompasses actions such as helping those in need, offering material support, donating resources, and engaging in volunteer work; it reflects a deep inward commitment to promoting and protecting the well-being of others (Willison, 2020). Benevolence is the demonstration of good intentions toward fellow human beings expressed through warmth, friendliness, compassion, ordinary decency, fair play, kindness, altruism, generosity, and love. A benevolent heart leans towards others rather than being indifferent to their welfare; it embodies a genuine concern for the welfare of others. Benevolence stands in clear contrast to ill will, prejudice, cruelty, and aggression; it reflects an attitude that seeks to uplift and support others through consistent acts of kindness and a commitment to the principles of fairness and care (Hanson, 2025).

Benevolence in a religious context can be understood as the expression of kindness, compassion, and goodwill towards others, encouraged as a fundamental duty across various faiths. It involves engaging in charitable acts and showing empathy as a reflection of one's commitment to the moral teachings found in sacred texts, which guide adherents to live ethically and serve others in their daily lives. In Christianity, for example, benevolence is not only an individual virtue but a communal value that fosters altruism. Thus, religious benevolence shapes how believers understand their responsibility to care for others, seeing such acts as part of their spiritual devotion and obedience to God (*StudySmarter*, 2024).

Hence, Christian benevolence refers to the practice of showing kindness, compassion, and generosity to others, motivated by Biblical teachings, particularly, those teachings exemplified by Jesus Christ. It is motivated by the teachings of Jesus Christ, which command believers to care for the needs of the poor, the sick, and the vulnerable as an expression of faith and obedience to God. It is the demonstration of love and kindness towards others within the Christian community, especially in the context of the church. It involves acts of charity, care for the poor, and concern for the wellbeing of others, especially those in the Church community who are in need; it is rooted in the Christian command to love one's neighbour as oneself. Christian benevolence is not merely a social duty but a spiritual obligation, which mirrors God's love for humanity and the believer's commitment to live out their faith through practical acts of service, support, and kindness towards others, regardless of their background or status.

**Mental Health (Well-being):** Mental health, often referred to as mental well-being, encompasses "a state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realize their abilities, learn well and work well, and contribute to their community. It has intrinsic and instrumental value and is integral to our well-being" (*World Health Organization*, 2022). In other words, mental health denotes the **absence of mental disorders such as depression, anxiety, and other conditions that significantly impair a person's thoughts, emotions, and behaviours**. It involves maintaining a balanced state of mind, positive self-perception, and the ability to form healthy relationships with others. This absence of mental disorders allows individuals to maintain clear thinking, emotional balance, and healthy relationships while adapting to changes and challenges in life (Keyes, 2002). Mental health is not only the absence of mental disorders but also includes having traits such as fortitude and resilience in the face of challenges, as well as the ability to manage emotions, and a clear sense of purpose in life (Seligman, 2011). Mental health is influenced by biological, psychological, and social factors, including life experiences, genetic predispositions, and community support systems (Prince et al., 2007). In the context of this paper, poverty which can be attributed to financial lack or deprivation, is a major cause of mental disorder especially among Christians.

**Poverty Alleviation:** Poverty alleviation involves the strategies, policies, and actions designed to reduce or end poverty. It includes efforts to enhance the living conditions, resource access, and general well-being of people and communities affected by poverty. In other words, it refers to organised efforts and policies aimed at reducing or eradicating poverty and its related hardships in society. It involves improving people's access to basic needs such as food, shelter, education, and healthcare while enhancing

their ability to participate meaningfully in economic and social activities (Sen, 1999). According to Sachs (2005), poverty alleviation is the process of lifting individuals and communities out of extreme poverty by providing them with the resources, skills, and opportunities necessary to sustain a decent standard of living. Poverty alleviation focuses not only on income generation but also on addressing the multidimensional nature of poverty, including lack of education, poor health, and limited social participation (World Bank, 2020). As noted by Todaro and Smith (2015), poverty alleviation involves removing barriers that prevent individuals from realising their potential, thereby promoting human dignity and well-being. It is not merely about providing temporary relief but about creating systems that enable individuals and communities to thrive well.

### **Biblical and Theological Bases of Christian Benevolence**

The foundation of benevolence is deeply rooted in Judeo-Christian tradition, as the biblical narrative consistently emphasises the importance of loving and caring for others. Benevolence is deeply entrenched in biblical narrative, flowing from God's character as compassionate and just, which establishes a footing for His people to care for others. The Bible repeatedly commands care for the poor, widows, orphans, and strangers. Both the Old and New Testaments provide clear guidelines for communal care and compassion for the poor, needy and less privileged as well as hospitality towards strangers and foreigners (Exodus 22:21; Hebrews 13:2). Deuteronomy 15:7–8 (NIV) instructs, "If anyone is poor among your fellow Israelites... do not be hard-hearted or tight-fisted toward them. Rather, be open-handed and freely lend them whatever they need," while Proverbs 19:17 notes, "Whoever is kind to the poor lends to the Lord." These injunctions frame benevolence not as optional charity but as a way of identifying with God (Wright, 2004). Additionally, the practice of leaving gleanings in the fields for the poor (Leviticus 19:9–10), provision of care for widows and orphans (Deuteronomy 14:28–29; 26:12), and the cancellation of debts during the Year of Jubilee (Leviticus 25) illustrate structural provisions for poverty alleviation embedded within biblical law (Fee & Stuart, 2014). These teachings reveal that God's vision for His people includes creating a community where the needs of the vulnerable are met, reflecting His justice and mercy. These instructions underscored the communal responsibility towards the vulnerable as an expression of faithfulness to God.

The New Testament further deepened and expanded this call, challenging believers to model their lives after Christ in their conduct and attitudes towards those with fewer resources. The teachings of Jesus and the practices of the early church highlighted that caring for others, particularly the poor, is not merely for personal benefit but stems from recognising that every person in need is made in the image of God, thereby affirming their dignity and worth (Poe, 2008; Placido, 2015). In the New Testament,

Jesus emphasises that love is the greatest commandment; he declared: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart... This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbour as yourself”. Jesus further teaches that the command to love is central to discipleship, stating, “My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you” (John 15:12, NIV), while Apostle John affirms that: “Whoever does not love, does not know God, because God is love” (1 John 4:8, NIV). In a practical exhibition of love, the book of Acts records how the early church collected welfare packages to support those in need, such as when the disciples in Antioch gathered relief to send to believers in Judea during a famine (11:27–30), and when the Jerusalem church distributed resources so that “there were no needy persons among them” (Acts 4:34–35, NIV). These actions demonstrate that the early church saw material benevolence as part of its spiritual mission, integrating faith with practical care to uphold the dignity and welfare of believers (Bruce, 1988).

More so, Christian practice and perspective on benevolence is based on the belief that whatever one does for the poor or those in need, one is directly or indirectly doing it for God. In Matthew 25:35–40 (NIV), Jesus states, “For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink... whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me,” affirming that caring for the poor is integral to serving Him (Wright, 2010). From this perspective, love is the foundation of the Christian practice of benevolence, as it compels believers to respond to the needs of others with genuine compassion and sacrificial care. It is impossible to truly give, help, or care for those in need without a heart of compassion provoked by love, as acts of benevolence in Christianity are not performed out of mere obligation but a response from a deep sense of empathy and the desire to reflect God’s love in practical ways, aligning with Jesus’ teaching that loving others is a reflection of loving God Himself.

Furthermore, James reinforces the Christian doctrine on benevolence teaching by asserting that faith without accompanying good works is dead, declaring, “Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,’ but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it?” (James 2:15–16, NIV). He also stated that, “faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead” (2:17, NIV). James went to state that: **“Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world”** (1:27, NIV). This shows that true religion in God’s sight is not limited to ritual practices but is demonstrated through practical care for the vulnerable. It affirms that Christian benevolence is an essential expression of faith. According to Keener (2014), authentic Christian faith is inseparable from benevolence towards the poor. This aligns with Paul’s instruction in Galatians 6:2 to “carry each other’s burdens,” and with his

collection for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem (Romans 15:25–27; 1 Corinthians 16:1–4), which shows the church actively organising financial support to alleviate poverty among believers. Myers (2011) explains that such acts of benevolence are not only about charity but are rooted in transformational development. Thus, the biblical foundation for benevolence integrates faith with practical care.

## **THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN POVERTY, ECONOMIC STABILITY AND MENTAL HEALTH**

Poverty directly contributes to worsened mental health through multiple, interlinked pathways. Poverty has been widely recognised as a significant factor that can cause or worsen mental illness by increasing exposure to chronic stress, insecurity, and social exclusion. Lund et al. (2010) argue that poverty contributes to the onset and persistence of mental disorders by limiting access to essential resources, increasing vulnerability to life stressors, and reducing opportunities for social participation. Similarly, Ridley et al. (2020) demonstrate that loss of income and negative income shocks, such as poor harvest due to drought or sudden job losses from factory closures, lead to increased psychological distress, anxiety, and depression among affected individuals. The financial instability characteristic of poverty, marked by volatile income and expenditures, creates constant worry and uncertainty about meeting basic needs, which intensifies mental health challenges. Patel et al. (2018) further assert that the cyclical relationship between poverty and poor mental health creates a trap where individuals facing economic deprivation are more likely to develop mental health challenges, which in turn can hinder their ability to pursue economic opportunities, deepening their poverty and exacerbating their mental distress.

More so, living in inadequate housing within low-income neighbourhoods further exposes the poor to environmental stressors, including pollution, extreme temperatures, and poor sleeping conditions, all of which negatively affect their mental well-being. Early-life poverty, experienced during childhood increases the risk of malnutrition and chronic stress, impairing cognitive development and predisposing individuals to mental illness later in life. Moreover, poverty is closely linked to poor physical health, higher exposure to trauma, violence, and crime, and lower social status, each of which is independently associated with deteriorating mental health (Ridley et al., 2020). These factors illustrate that poverty is not merely an economic condition but a persistent stressor that undermines mental health, showing that addressing poverty is essential for improving psychological well-being within communities.

In view of the above, economic and financial stability play a crucial role in safeguarding or restoring mental health, as the assurance of financial security and capability significantly reduces stress and lowers the risk of developing mental health challenges such as depression and anxiety. In their study, Bialowolski et al. (2020)

observed that a one standard deviation improvement in financial capability can decrease the odds of receiving a depression diagnosis in the following year by 38%, illustrating that as individuals gain greater control over their finances, their mental well-being improves through reduced financial stress and insecurity. Conversely, financial distress such as frequent worry about food, housing, or healthcare expenses was associated with a 17% to 51% increased likelihood of developing depression, highlighting that economic hardship significantly heightens psychological distress and increases vulnerability to mental health challenges.

The study also revealed that financial safety and stability are positively associated with improved self-reported physical and mental health outcomes over time. In contrast, financial distress was found to be negatively associated with these health outcomes, indicating that ongoing financial struggles can worsen mental and physical health. This demonstrates that when individuals experience financial stability, they are likely to have lower levels of anxiety and a greater sense of security, which together enhance mental well-being. Furthermore, good mental health can empower individuals to make sound financial decisions, manage their resources more effectively, and pursue economic opportunities with confidence. This interplay creates a reinforcing cycle where financial stability supports mental health, and in turn, mental well-being enables individuals to sustain and improve their financial stability (Bialowolski et al., 2020).

### **THE THERAPEUTIC ROLE OF CHRISTIAN BENEVOLENCE: HOW CHURCH POVERTY ALLEVIATION INITIATIVES ENHANCE MENTAL WELL-BEING**

Within the Christian context, benevolence expressed through food distribution, business grants, healthcare support, and educational sponsorships by churches possess therapeutic effects, as these acts alleviate the immediate economic pressures that contribute to mental distress while also providing emotional and spiritual support that nurtures hope and fortitude. By meeting practical needs and reducing the environmental and financial stressors that exacerbate mental health challenges, benevolent actions become more than charity; they become a pathway to psychological healing, empowering individuals to regain confidence, pursue opportunities, and experience a renewed sense of dignity and purpose in life. This demonstrates that benevolence, when implemented thoughtfully, aligns with therapeutic interventions by addressing the root causes of mental distress, illustrating the critical role it plays in restoring mental health within communities affected by poverty (Ridley et al., 2020).

Beyond addressing material deprivation, Christian benevolence within Nigerian churches possesses a therapeutic dimension that contributes significantly to the mental well-being of its recipients. Acts of charity within the church are often accompanied by spiritual counselling, prayers, and emotional support, which foster a renewed sense of hope and belonging among those grappling with economic hardship. As a result, those



who benefit from the church's welfare packages frequently express feelings of happiness, excitement, and emotional revitalization, as the practical support they receive directly eases their material burdens. Many who were previously depressed, anxious and worried as a result of their financial situations become optimistic and hopeful as their immediate material problems are solved, allowing them to face the future with renewed hope. Since financial lack and related challenges often contribute significantly to poor mental health, the meeting of these needs through church-based support often results in an automatic restoration of mental well-being. In this way, church-based poverty alleviation initiatives do not merely serve as welfare measures but function as therapeutic interventions that practically address the spiritual, psychological, and material needs of individuals within the faith community.

Christian benevolence, particularly as demonstrated through church-led poverty alleviation initiatives, plays a vital role in enhancing mental well-being within communities by addressing the multifaceted challenges of poverty while nurturing emotional stability and hope. In the Lagos metropolis, churches such as the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), Dunamis International Christian Centre, Living Faith Church, the Anglican Church, Methodist Church, Deeper Life, Anglican Church, Salvation Ministries, Christ Apostolic Church, Catholic Church, among others, have developed comprehensive programmes that not only meet the physical needs of members in need but also attend to their psychological and spiritual well-being, recognising that poverty imposes emotional burdens such as anxiety, hopelessness, and social isolation. As Myers (2011) notes, Christian benevolence understands poverty as a state of broken relationships with God, self, others, and creation that requires practical restoration, which aligns with these churches' commitment to viewing poverty alleviation as a ministry of healing and restoring the dignity of the people.

## **REVIEW OF CHRISTIAN BENEVOLENCE PRACTICES AND ITS THERAPEUTIC POTENCY IN SELECTED LAGOS CHURCHES**

The benevolence practices of selected churches in Lagos show that Christian charity extends beyond material assistance it offers emotional and mental healing. Through structured welfare systems, these churches help to reduce anxiety, depression, and emotional trauma among members, especially during personal or financial crises. Several testimonies from church members, gathered through personal communications, reinforce the therapeutic potency of such benevolence.

**Living Faith Church (Winners Chapel)** operates a monthly Welfare Sunday and promotes support within small cell groups. Mr Edikan Ukpong (Personal Communication, July 12, 2025) explained that relief materials—clothes, food, and money are collected and distributed to the needy. He emphasised the use of social

capital among members. Ronke Samuel (July 14, 2025) testified that receiving monthly clothing support for her children relieved her of anxiety and boosted her mental stability as a single mother. Similarly, Mr Silas Asiwaju (July 12, 2025) shared that after struggling emotionally due to an inability to pay his postgraduate fees, his cell group raised the needed funds, restoring his mental well-being.

**Dunamis International Gospel Centre** integrates benevolence into its Home Church model. Welfare Distribution Sunday (last Sunday of the month) provides food and medical care to both members and outsiders. According to Richard Archibong (July 13, 2025), many people who were stressed or uncertain about their next meal or healthcare found emotional relief through this system. He noted that the consistent support cured emotional stress and anxiety, restoring peace to beneficiaries' lives.

**Christ Apostolic Church** collects a weekly "Offering for the Poor" and sometimes mobilises voluntary contributions to address urgent member needs. Dr. Vincent Olusakin (July 12, 2025) noted that the church's welfare initiatives help reduce financial-induced emotional burdens such as stress, isolation, and helplessness. The consistent assistance promotes hope and a sense of belonging, which are vital to emotional and psychological healing.

**Qua Iboe Church** also collects weekly welfare offerings. Victoria Monday (July 15, 2025) testified that she and her sisters receive regular transport support from the church. This assistance eases their stress and emotional worry about attending church services despite financial constraints. She expressed joy and mental comfort knowing that their transportation needs are consistently met.

**Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG)** has active welfare departments in every parish. Aniekan Umanah (July 13, 2025) explained how the church organises food and rent support. Esther Joseph (July 10, 2025) recounted almost losing her mind after her father's death and inability to pay university fees, but her pastor intervened through the welfare department, helping her recover emotionally. Temilade Ambode (July 10, 2025) shared that she experienced deep depression after a failed business and rent issues. Church support helped her revive her business and mental state—she "slept like a baby" after long nights of worry.

**The Apostolic Church** works through its movements and presbytery to address member needs. Yemi Adebayo (July 7, 2025) explained how the church mobilises resources during times of illness, bereavement, or childbirth. Mrs Mary Ekpo (July 11, 2025) shared that after losing her husband in 2023, she was overwhelmed and

emotionally broken, unsure how to finance his burial. The church stepped in, handling major costs, which lifted her emotional burden and helped her regain stability.

In all these churches, Christian benevolence is a vehicle not only for material aid but also for emotional healing and mental resilience. The testimonies of members like Silas Asiwaju, Temilade Ambode, and Mary Ekpo illustrate how welfare ministries foster dignity, relieve distress, and restore psychological balance, affirming that faith-based benevolence carries significant therapeutic value in the Nigerian context.

## CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated that Christian benevolence within Nigerian churches plays a significant therapeutic role in enhancing the mental well-being of members by addressing poverty and its associated emotional distress. The findings reveal that churches in Lagos metropolis actively engage in welfare practices including food distributions, medical outreaches, educational support, and targeted financial interventions. These acts of benevolence reduce anxiety, depression, and feelings of hopelessness among beneficiaries while fostering a sense of belonging, gratitude, and emotional stability within the church community. Testimonies from beneficiaries across Lagos show that these interventions have not only met physical needs but have also restored emotional well-being, demonstrating that Christian benevolence can be a practical means of addressing the psychological impacts of poverty.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that Nigerian churches should continue to strengthen and systematise their welfare practices while exploring partnerships with relevant health professionals to provide psychosocial support alongside material assistance. Churches should also engage in advocacy that addresses systemic poverty to complement their charitable interventions, thereby creating an all-round approach to mental well-being among their members. This study contributes to knowledge by bridging theological, empirical, and mental health perspectives on Christian benevolence in Nigeria, showing that church-led poverty alleviation efforts can serve as a therapeutic intervention for mental health challenges, and positioning the church as a vital community agent in the intersection between economic stability and mental well-being.

## REFERENCES

- Ayegboyin, D. (2019). *Christian social welfare and poverty alleviation in Nigeria*. Lagos: Malthouse Press.
- Bialowolski, P., Weziak-Bialowolska, D., Lee, M. T., Chen, Y., VanderWeele, T. J., & McNeely, E. (2021). The role of financial conditions for physical and mental health: Evidence from a longitudinal survey and insurance claims data. *Social Science & Medicine*, 281, 1–10.

- Bruce, F. F. (1988). *The Book of Acts* (Revised edition). Eerdmans.
- De Silva, M. J., McKenzie, K., Harpham, T., & Huttly, S. R. A. (2007). Social capital and mental illness: A systematic review. *Journal of Epidemiology & Community Health*, 61 (8), 619–627.
- Fee, G. D., & Stuart, D. (2014). *How to read the Bible for all its worth* (4th ed.). Zondervan.
- Gaiya, M. A. B. (2002). *The Pentecostal revolution in Nigeria*. Occasional Paper, Centre of African Studies, University of Copenhagen.
- Hanson, R. (2025). What are your intentions toward others? Retrieved July 13, 2025, from <https://rickhanson.com/be-benevolent/>
- Idowu, E. (2017). Pentecostal churches and poverty alleviation in Nigeria: A socio-religious perspective. *Ilorin Journal of Religious Studies*, 7(2), 45–60.
- Kawachi, I., & Berkman, L. F. (2001). Social ties and mental health. *Journal of Urban Health*, 78 (3), 458–467.
- Keener, C. S. (2014). *The IVP Bible background commentary: New Testament* (2nd ed.). IVP Academic.
- Keyes, C. L. M. (2002). The mental health continuum: From languishing to flourishing in life. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 43 (2), 207–222.
- Koenig, H. G. (2009). Research on religion, spirituality, and mental health: A review. *Canadian Journal of Psychiatry*, 54 (5), 283–291.
- Lund, C., Breen, A., Flisher, A. J., Kakuma, R., Corrigall, J., Joska, J. A., & Patel, V. (2010). Poverty and common mental disorders in low and middle income countries: A systematic review. *Social Science & Medicine*, 71 (3), 517–528.
- Martela, F., & Ryan, R. M. (2015). The benefits of benevolence: Basic psychological needs, beneficence, and the enhancement of well-being. *Journal of Personality*, 84(6), 750–764.
- Myers, B. L. (2011). *Walking with the poor: Principles and practices of transformational development* (Revised and expanded edition). Orbis Books.
- Patel, V., Saxena, S., Lund, C., Thornicroft, G., Baingana, F., Bolton, P., & Unützer, J. (2018). The Lancet Commission on global mental health and sustainable development. *The Lancet*, 392(10157), 1553–1598.
- Placido, N. (2015, November). *A history of charity and the church*. Paper presented at the NACSW Convention, Grand Rapids, Michigan.
- Poe, M. A. (2008). Good news for the poor: Christian influence on social welfare. In B. Hugen & T. L. Scales (Eds.), *Christianity and social work* (pp. 105–118). Botsford, CT: NACSW.
- Prince, M., Patel, V., Saxena, S., Maj, M., Maselko, J., Phillips, M. R., & Rahman, A. (2007). No health without mental health. *The Lancet*, 370\*(9590), 859–877.

- Ridley, M., Rao, G., Schilbach, F., & Patel, V. (2020). Poverty, depression, and anxiety: Causal evidence and mechanisms. *Science*, 370(6522), 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.aay0214>
- Sachs, J. D. (2005). *The end of poverty: Economic possibilities for our time*. Penguin Press.
- Seligman, M. E. P. (2011). *Flourish: A visionary new understanding of happiness and well-being*. Free Press.
- Sen, A. (1999). *Development as freedom*. Oxford University Press.
- StudySmarter. (2024). *Benevolence in religion*. StudySmarter. Retrieved July 13, 2025, from <https://www.studysmarter.co.uk/explanations/religious-studies/belief-systems/benevolence-in-religion/>
- Todaro, M. P., & Smith, S. C. (2015). *Economic development* (12th ed.). Pearson.
- Uchem, R. N., & Onuh, F. A. (2020). Church-based poverty alleviation programmes and economic empowerment of the urban poor in Nigeria. *Journal of Religion and Human Relations*, 12(1), 191–209.
- Willison, K. (2020). Benevolence. In V. Zeigler-Hill & T. K. Shackelford (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of personality and individual differences*. Springer. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-24612-3\\_1048](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-24612-3_1048).
- World Bank. (2020). *Poverty overview*. Retrieved July 13, 2025 from <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/poverty/overview>
- World Health Organization. (2022). *Mental health*. World Health Organization. Retrieved July 13, 2025, from [https://www.who.int/health-topics/mental-health#tab=tab\\_1](https://www.who.int/health-topics/mental-health#tab=tab_1)
- Wright, C. J. H. (2004). *Old Testament ethics for the people of God*. InterVarsity Press.
- Wright, N. T. (2010). *After you believe: Why Christian character matters*. HarperOne.