



breadfortheworld
HAVE FAITH. END HUNGER.

Biblical Basis for Advocacy

*Speak out for those who cannot speak, for the rights of all the destitute.
Speak out, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy.*

Proverbs 31:8-9

*Give the king your justice, O God, and your righteousness to a king's son.
May he judge your people with righteousness, and your poor with justice.
May the mountains yield prosperity for the people, and the hills, in righteousness.
May he defend the cause of the poor of the people, give deliverance to the needy, and
crush the oppressor.*

Psalms 72:1-4

The dictionary defines advocacy as “pleading the cause of another, siding with, vindicating, recommending publicly.” Bread for the World engages Christian citizens and churches in advocating for and with hungry people at home and abroad.

The premier redemption story of the Hebrew Scriptures, the deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt, begins with the very political act of God sending Moses to Pharaoh, demanding the people’s release from slavery (Ex. 3.7-12). The Exodus account has stirred hope among oppressed people ever since.

As Israel moved out of the wilderness to settle the land, kings, priests and elders became responsible for the nations observance of the law. When the law was not upheld, or when those in power became corrupt, God sent messengers to call for repentance and for a return to right relationships. This was the time of the prophets.

A key to understanding the advocacy role of the prophets is that society in biblical times was religiously defined. Political and religious institutions performed allied functions. The king, priests, and elders had the sacred duty of ensuring the observance of God’s law.

In the New Testament, Jesus was continually in conflict with religious leaders over the essential meaning of the law. Just treatment of people was at the core of his concern: “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint, dill, and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith; it is these you ought to have practiced without neglecting the others” (Mt 23.23). When Jesus challenged the Pharisees and Sadducees, he was confronting the public policy decision-makers.

In the face of the political, social, and religious institutions of our own time, we are likewise called by the Spirit to pray, open our hearts to God, reach out to others in their need, and confront structures, behavior and policies that impoverish and oppress. We are blessed with a system of government that allows us to have a voice in public policy decision. It is legitimate, even imperative, for us to exercise our prophetic ministry in the public policy arena secure in the belief that this is how the Bible directs us.