

“The Gleaners and I” starring Agnes Varda, Francois Wertheimer, & Bodan Litnanski, 2000, NR, 82 minutes

Major themes:

- Gleaning
- Poverty
- Wastefulness
- Resourcefulness
- Aging
- Compassion
- Noticing people
- Simplicity

Major characters:

- Agnes, the videographer / narrator
- A cast of colorful characters

Movie Nights for Thinkers and Seekers

Background info:

- “*Gleaning*” is the act of collecting leftover crops from farmers' fields after they have been commercially harvested or on fields where it is not economically profitable to harvest. Some ancient cultures promoted gleaning as an early form of a welfare system. It can also mean to gather something slowly and carefully in small pieces.
- According to the Torah, farmers were to leave the corners of their fields unharvested, and they were not to harvest any left-overs that had been forgotten when they had harvested the majority of a field. These things should be left for the poor, widows, strangers, and orphans. The Book of Ruth features gleaning by the widow Ruth to provide for herself and Naomi, also a widow.
- Jesus and his disciples practiced a form of gleaning as they walked through grainfields breaking off heads of wheat to eat (Mark 2:23).
- The UK's Institution of Mechanical Engineers released a report in January 2013 (“*Global Food; Waste Not, Want Not*”) stating that between 30% and 50% (1 – 2 billion metric tonnes) of food produced around the world never makes it on to a plate. (1 metric tonne = approx. 2,205 pounds)
- In the United Kingdom, approximately 30% of vegetable crops are not harvested due to their failure to meet retailers’ standards on physical appearance. Up to half of the food purchased in Europe and the U.S. is thrown away by consumers.
- In the modern world, gleaning is practiced by humanitarian groups which distribute the gleaned food to the poor and hungry. This can include the collection of food from supermarkets at the end of the day that would otherwise be thrown away. There are a number of organizations that practice gleaning to resolve issues of societal hunger.
- The U.S. Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act (enacted in 1996) was created to encourage food donation to nonprofits by minimizing liability (except in cases of gross negligence). Though a helpful and visionary law, little has been done to promote or implement the law and generally it has languished in obscurity.

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Scriptures:

Deuteronomy 24:19 – 21 (NLT) – *“When you are harvesting your crops and forget to bring in a bundle of grain from your field, don’t go back to get it. Leave it for the foreigners, orphans, and widows. Then the LORD your God will bless you in all you do. When you beat the olives from your olive trees, don’t go over the boughs twice. Leave the remaining olives for the foreigners, orphans, and widows. When you gather the grapes in your vineyard, don’t glean the vines after they are picked. Leave the remaining grapes for the foreigners, orphans, and widows.”*

John 6:12 (NLT) – *“When they had all had enough to eat, he said to his disciples, ‘Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted.’”*

Deuteronomy 15:11 (NIV) – *“There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore I command you to be openhanded toward your brothers and toward the poor and needy in your land.”*

Proverbs 14:31 (NLT) – *“Those who oppress the poor insult their Maker, but helping the poor honors him.”*

Matthew 15:32 (NIV) – *“Jesus called his disciples to him and said, ‘I have compassion for these people; they have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat. I do not want to send them away hungry, or they may collapse on the way.’”*

Isaiah 58:6 – 7 (NLT) – *“. . . this is the kind of fasting I want: Free those who are wrongly imprisoned; lighten the burden of those who work for you. Let the oppressed go free, and remove the chains that bind people. Share your food with the hungry, and give shelter to the homeless. Give clothes to those who need them, and do not hide from relatives who need your help.”*

1 John 3:17 (NLT) – *“If someone has enough money to live well and sees a brother or sister in need but shows no compassion--how can God's love be in that person?”*

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Discussion points:

1. In this documentary we see people glean many things, including corn, wheat, onions, potatoes, produce from markets, food thrown in the trash, herbs, grapes, figs, tomatoes, curbside trash, antique trash & treasures, oysters, recycled materials, people's thoughts. What did you learn from this panorama of gleaning in the 21st century?
2. British newspaper "*The Guardian*" reported on January 10th, 2013 (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2013/jan/10/half-world-food-waste>) that "*as much as half of all the food produced in the world – equivalent to two billion tonnes – ends up as waste every year.*" Discuss how you feel after hearing such a claim.
3. The filmmaker wanted to draw attention to a serious issue in our world today that may not be particularly well known. In what ways has this film inspired or envisioned you to do something? Discuss practical things we can do to inspire or envision others to take action about the issues that God has stirred us to be involved with.
4. How did her the filmmaker's use of the painting, "The Last Judgment" by Van der Weyden contribute to her message?
5. Discuss this statement: "*Salvaging is a matter of ethics for me because i find it utterly unacceptable to see all this waste on the streets.*"
6. Discuss some practical ways in which we can choose to live more simply (and less consumeristically) so that others can simply live.

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Action steps:

The Society of St. Andrew – <http://www.endhunger.org/> – was formed in 1979 as an intentional community of two families called to life and ministry together. It has grown into an ecumenical, non-profit, charitable organization dedicated to leading others into lives of faithful community and service. Since our founding in 1979, the Society of St. Andrew has worked to fulfill the mandate of the Gospel in our lives by striving to adhere to the words of 1 John 3:18: *“Let us love not only in words, but in deed and in truth.”*

The mission of the Society of St. Andrew is to introduce people to God's grace through meeting their hungers:

- Food for the body
 - Gleaning America's Fields ~ Feeding America's Hungry. That is what the Society of St. Andrew does. We do it simply, and we do it more effectively and far more efficiently than any other hunger relief organization. Our hunger relief programs include Potato & Produce, Gleaning Network, and Harvest of Hope.
- God's word for the spirit
 - Throughout the scriptures, God makes clear that those who have been blessed with plenty should share their abundance with those who do not have enough. We believe that if the people of God who today make up the church take seriously God's commands, and truly follow Jesus' example, no one in any neighborhood of America would ever experience hunger.
- Community of love for the heart
 - People from all denominations and organizations participate actively in our ministry by making financial contributions, by gleaning with us, and through their prayers.
- Opportunity for those who desire action
 - The Society of St. Andrew believes that all of us, from faith groups and many organizations - working together - can eliminate world hunger, beginning by ending hunger in America.

Harvest of Hope gleaning retreat – October 11th – 13th, 2013 - \$75 per person
<http://www.endhunger.org/Harvest/PDFs/HoH-2013-Dahlonga-Oct-11-13.pdf>