

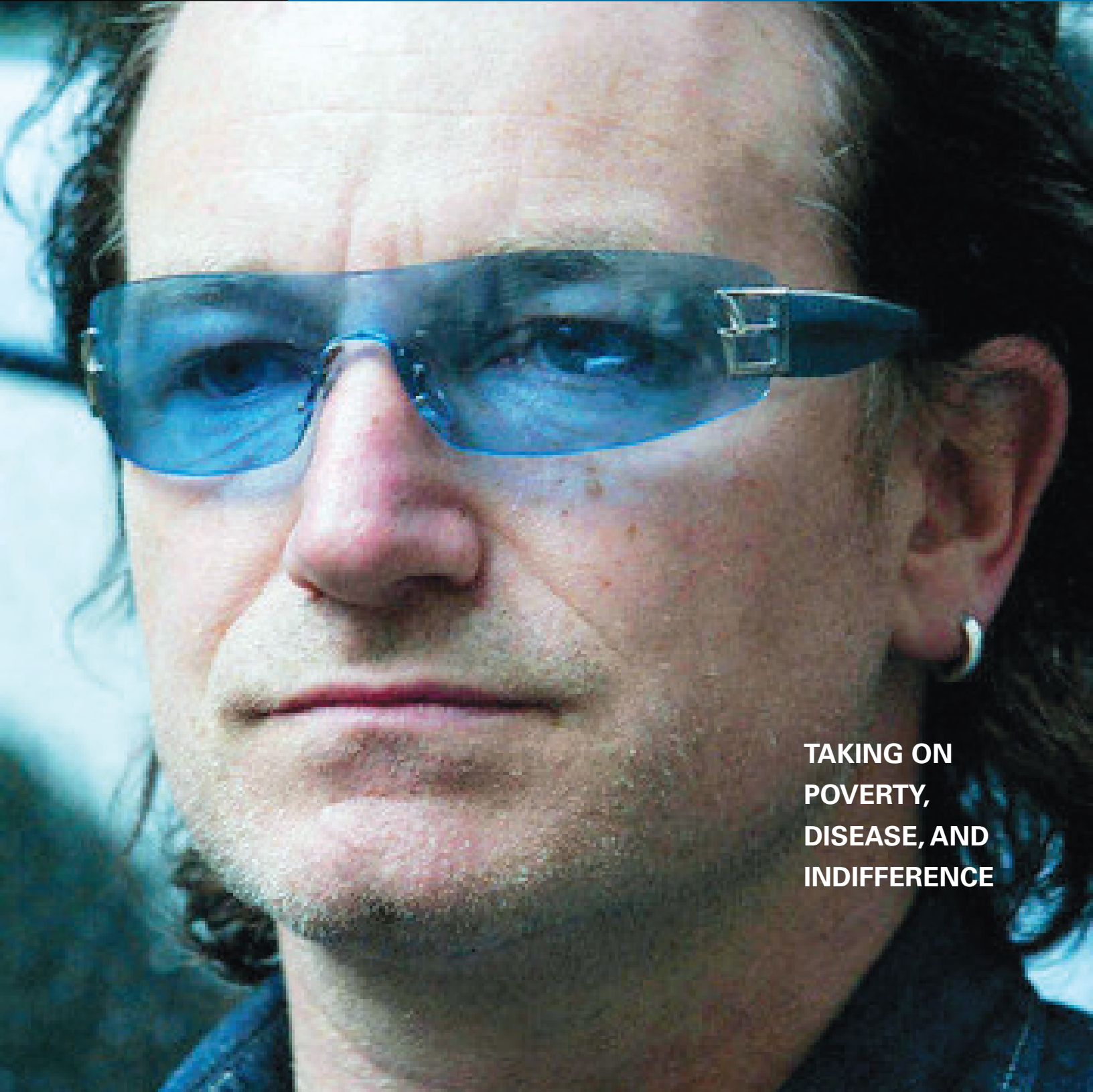
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# Virtue In Action

Bono Rocks the Worlds of Music and Charity

VIRTUE IN ACTION

FOSTERING CITIZENSHIP THROUGH CHARACTER EDUCATION



TAKING ON  
POVERTY,  
DISEASE, AND  
INDIFFERENCE

**2005** was a good year for Bono and U2. They were nominated for 5 Grammy awards, including best album, best rock performance, and best song for 2005. It would be a nice addition to their 17 Grammys already won, as well as being inducted this year into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. Bono was also named, along with Bill and Melinda Gates, Time Magazine's "Persons of the Year" in 2005 for his work in combating poverty, disease and indifference. Bono's story of accomplishing so much in two completely different endeavors speaks to the power of knowledge, wisdom, faith, generosity and defining one's mission in life.

Bono's life has not always been glamorous. He was born in Dublin, Ireland during a time of difficult religious conflict. When he was in his teens, his mother died of a heart attack at her own father's funeral. Growing up in a nation torn by conflict and losing a mother at a young age would make it easy for anyone to fall into a life of despair. However, Bono **persevered** through these **adversities** and used them as fuel to propel his musical talent into the stratosphere.

By the mid 1980's, U2 was one of the most successful bands in the world, yet they made time for a few significant contributions to charitable works. In 1985, U2 joined a lengthy list of music stars that performed in the Live Aid concert for Ethiopian famine relief, and they unexpectedly stole the show. The following year, in 1986's "Conspiracy of Hope" tour for Amnesty International, U2 headlined the campaign hoping to highlight the plight of millions of people throughout the world denied basic human rights such as freedom of speech, freedom of religion and the right to vote. They also wanted to bring attention to the suffering of those who are imprisoned, tortured and killed by their governments for attempting to defend their freedom and dignity.

The Live Aid and Conspiracy of Hope tours spread the seeds of **empathy** by helping millions of fans to more fully realize and develop a greater sense of sympathy for the suffering of others. The tours also helped fans realize that they can make a difference through donations, and writing letters on behalf of those imprisoned because of their political and / or religious beliefs.

### **Taking It the Extra Mile**

For a celebrity, it's relatively easy to write a large check for a charity and to perform at one benefit concert. But as Bono and his wife Ali learned more about the poor and oppressed, their empathy evolved into a strong sense of **compassion** as they developed an intense desire to actually work with the poor. Bono and Ali went to Wello, Ethiopia where they worked for six weeks in an orphanage. During his stay, Bono became keenly aware of the corruption, disease, starvation, and war that was and still is ravaging much of the continent. It was now becoming personal for Bono, and he desired to continue



learning about the causes of poverty and disease.

In 1997 he received a report from a development advocate, Jamie Drummond, showing that although Live Aid raised \$200 million, Ethiopia alone paid \$500 million in annual loans, also known as "debt service". Many poor nations borrowed a lot of money from wealthier nations and banks for projects that they hoped would lift their nations out of poverty. Most of these projects, however, have failed and the cost of paying back the principal and interest on these loans leaves little money for the nations to spend on health care and education. Almost immediately, Bono signed on as a spokesman for Jubilee 2000, a church-based campaign from England asking governments to cancel Third World debt.

Over time, Bono was discovering a new mission in his life--to use his resources, talents and time to more actively and effectively help the poor. He flew to Washington DC on weekends for sessions with economist Jeffrey Sachs. Once he became a master on the subject, Bono started speaking out. Eventually, he got President Clinton to agree to erase \$6 billion in African nations' debts to the U.S. Bono thought he had achieved a great success, but then he learned that Congress needed to pass new laws to cancel the debt.

At this point, it was probably tempting for Bono to give

up. It's one thing to convince the President, it's a much larger thing to try and persuade Congress to cancel billions of dollars in debt. Instead of giving up, Bono decided to **persevere** and to personally lobby the leaders of Congress. Along with the help of many others, Bono eventually succeeded. Congress agreed to cancel the debt of the world's poorest nations.

In considering how to have a real impact in fighting poverty, Bono determined he must define **effective** and measurable responses to the problems, and to reach out to others for help. To do this, he decided he needed an organization dedicated to this mission. He founded DATA, a non-profit group aiming to raise awareness in three areas: the crisis of unpayable DEBTS; the urgent need for more and better foreign development assistance, especially to fight AIDS; and the unfair TRADE rules which limit African nations' ability to export products to wealthier nations.

### Knowledge in Combating Poverty and Disease

DATA and Bono place a high priority on gathering the information and **knowledge** to further their understanding of the causes of poverty and disease, and the advantages and disadvantages of strategies to combat them. Bono meets with professors, scientists, mathematicians, and economists from M.I.T and Harvard for expert analysis. In meeting with experts in various fields, Bono is able to connect his extraordinary persona with his knowledge previously gained—electrifying a room and inspiring people who would seem to otherwise have nothing in common with him.

Bono and DATA also realize that to be effective they need to be able to persuade other decision makers, especially in government and business, to join in their cause. To this end, DATA and Bono study the backgrounds and interests of the people he is meeting with, so that they may pitch their proposals in a way that will resonate with the decision maker and increase their probability of success.

For example, in a recent lunch with President Bush in Oct. 2005, Bono quoted passages from the Bible that in part have inspired him to work for the poor. In discussing his faith in the Dec. 26 edition of Time Magazine Bono remarked, "I try to live it rather than talk about it...but I cannot escape my conviction that God is interested in the progress of mankind, individually and collectively." And in meeting with Democratic leaders, Bono emphasizes

multilateralism – organizing many nations to work together- in combating poverty, and how "development aid reminds the rest of the world of America's greatness."

### Wisdom and Effectiveness

DATA and Bono aren't satisfied with understanding the problems of poverty and just talking about them. In the Time interview Bono states, "You know what my least favorite John Lennon song is? 'Imagine.' At the root of it is some rigorous thinking about the way things could be, but people have stolen the idea and made it an anthem for wishful thinking. I'm against wishful thinking. I hate it." Instead, Bono and DATA strive to be **wise** in applying the knowledge they have gained to develop and promote effective solutions to poverty. In his lunch with President Bush, Bono emphasized their shared desire to support projects where success or failure can be objectively measured. Bono then asked for more money to fund specific projects.

### Power of Partners

Bono emphasizes working with others because he knows that to be effective in taking on a complex problem like the poverty of a continent, he will need the collective wisdom and support of many leaders. DATA hires lobbyists to consistently discuss their proposals with many members of Congress and their staff. They organize bipartisan dinners and gatherings backstage at concerts with business leaders and politicians. Often bitter political adversaries will come together for meetings with Bono because they know he is educated with effective proposals and is absolutely committed.

In the Time Magazine article, Josh Tyrانزيel writes: "Bono's great gift is to take what has made him famous--charm, clarity of voice, an ability to touch people in their secret heart--combine those traits with a keen grasp of the political game and obsessive attention to detail, and channel it all toward getting everyone, from world leaders to music lovers, to engage with something overwhelming in its complexity?"

Most recently, Bono targeted last year's G-8 Summit meeting as an opportunity to team up with political leaders of the most powerful nations. On the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the first Live Aid concert, the goal was to have 100% of the debt cancelled for the poorest nations of Africa, and \$50 billion in additional aid for Africa. On July 8, 2005 the leaders agreed to cancel the debt of the 18 poorest African countries and to increase aid by \$50 billion by 2010.



Bono knows that world leaders will only sustain the battle against poverty and disease if the citizens and voters of their nations support the endeavor. So Bono helped launch ONE, a campaign to rally Americans ONE by ONE to fight AIDS and extreme poverty. ONE already has pledges of support from 2 million people and hopes to become a sustained movement of people and voters working to erase poverty. ONE is asking Americans to sign the ONE declaration.

“**WE BELIEVE** that in the best American tradition of helping others help themselves, now is the time to join with other countries in a historic pact for compassion and justice to help the poorest people of the world overcome AIDS and extreme poverty. **WE RECOGNIZE** that a pact including such measures as fair trade, debt relief, fighting corruption and directing additional resources for basic needs - education, health, clean water, food, and care for orphans - would transform the futures and hopes of an entire generation in the poorest countries, at a cost equal to just one percent more of the US budget. **WE COMMIT** ourselves - one person, one voice, one vote at a time - to make a better, safer world for all.”

**Why He Does What He Does**

From the time U2 started, Bono has shown through music, lyrics, public statements and work his passion to address the bigger issues and to pursue noble goals. When it comes to life, Bono knows what it is about. “On so many issues it’s difficult to know what God wants from us,” Bono told Bush, “but on this issue, helping the desperately poor, we know God will bless it.” Bono is a man who has discerned his mission in life. For some like Bono this is done in part through a religious faith. Those who don’t believe in God can still objectively reflect on their talents and interests and find ways that they can best be used to help others.

Bono’s success in achieving some of his goals offers us a road map for success in life. His desire to learn and be effective, his willingness to work with others, his energy and work ethic, have all helped him achieve real results in combating poverty, disease and indifference. Bono is also a model of **generosity** in giving not just his money, but also his time, his talent and his heart. ■

**The World’s Poor**

- Each year, more than 8 million people around the world die because they are too poor to stay alive, most of these are children.
- 1.3 billion have no access to clean water; 3 billion have no access to sanitation; 2 billion have no access to electricity .
- Over 1 billion people—1 in 6 people around the world—live in extreme poverty, defined as living on less than \$1 a day.

- Half the world — nearly three billion people — live on less than two dollars a day.
- More than 800 million go hungry each day
- Over 100 million primary school-age children cannot go to school.

Source: **Netaid** [http://www.netaid.org/global\\_poverty/global-poverty/](http://www.netaid.org/global_poverty/global-poverty/) and **Global Issues** <http://www.globalissues.org/TradeRelated/Facts.asp>

The following sites provide additional information on the socioeconomic status of the world’s poor:

**UNICEF Fast Facts** [http://www.unicef.org/voy/explore/sowc06/explore\\_2463.html](http://www.unicef.org/voy/explore/sowc06/explore_2463.html)

**United Nations Children’s Fund** <http://www.unicef.org>

**UN Water and sanitation** <http://www.unhabitat.org/mediacentre/documents/wwf18.pdf>

**Vocabulary**

**Empathy** – Entering into the feelings or spirit of others and imagining yourself in another person’s situation

**Compassion** – Feeling of sympathy for the distress of others, with the desire to help them

**Faith** –Having trust in God, in yourself, and / or in others

**Generosity** – Freely giving of our time, talents and resources

**Knowledge** – facts, information, and skills acquired by a person through experience or education

**Perseverance** – trying hard and continuously, despite obstacles and difficulties

**Teamwork** – the combined action of a group of people, especially when effective and efficient

**Wisdom** -Ability to apply knowledge, experience, understanding or common sense. The ability to discern or judge what is true, right, or lasting. Good judgment.

# Virtue In Action

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### Lesson Goals

- ▶ Develop understanding of the virtues of empathy, compassion, generosity, faith, perseverance, knowledge and wisdom.
- ▶ Help students to see how by living out these virtues, we can make a real difference in the lives of others
- ▶ Inspire within students an openness and willingness to define their own mission in life
- ▶ Provide students with a realistic assessment of the degree of poverty within our world
- ▶ Combat indifference to poverty and disease, by making students aware of how they can make a difference

### Highlighted Virtues

**Empathy**  
**Compassion**  
**Faith**  
**Generosity**  
**Teamwork**  
**Wisdom**

### Discussion Questions

1. Do we as a community of friends and students talk about the needs of the poor, both within in our own nation, and in far away nations such as in Africa?

Should we view ourselves as global citizens who have a responsibility to help people in other countries? What are some of the reasons we should or should not?

2. What virtues has Bono lived out that have helped him to succeed in helping to mobilize resources and solutions for the poor? Define one of these virtues and give an example of how he lives that virtue out.
3. Bono became more committed in promoting policies for the poor after learning about the famine in Ethiopia and working first-hand with the children. What personal experiences or major events/disasters in the world have impacted you to consider the needs of others?

Can you share some examples of going beyond the feelings, where you acted to help others in need? (This could also be a journal writing activity).

4. Let's read again the ONE declaration. Do you think we should sign it, why or why not?

or those who decide to sign the declaration, also consider writing your congressman or senator to state your support. Also discuss the pledge with friends and family, and encourage them to show their support.

<http://www.senate.gov/> <http://www.house.gov/>

5. Do you think famous entertainers like Bono have the ability to inspire us to consider the needs of others, and should they? Or, do you think entertainers should just perform and not promote causes?
6. Does it surprise you that someone as wealthy and successful as Bono dedicates so much time and actual work in helping others in need? Would we do the same if we were rich and famous?
7. Have you ever had to work toward a common goal with anyone who is different than you, or someone who has different beliefs and ideologies than yours? If so, how did it go? How could it have worked out better?

### Writing Options

1. As U2 rose to international fame, they started receiving media backlash for promoting their causes. This affected them enough that they took a few years off to rethink their direction as a group.

**Continued on back**

After resurfacing, they stayed the course, with Bono continuing to promote his causes and awareness on global poverty and AIDS. Do you think this was the right approach? Do you think rock groups and performers should discuss their cause or just perform?

2. Write about one charity organization or advocacy group that you believe in which benefits others in need, then tell why it motivates you. What exact need does it address? Then, assess the organization from Bono's approach:

- Are they affective in addressing the need?
- Do they work with others in approaching the need?
- Are they effective in communicating their mission and work?

Extended Learning Activities

Activity A: Review again the facts presented on page 5 of the student text.

Do these statistics surprise you? Let's try to go beyond the statistics and place ourselves in a situation that happens millions of times each year. Imagine that your brother or sister is dying from a disease that is entirely preventable, yet your family is either too poor to afford the medication, or it isn't even available in the region where you live.

- How would we feel?
- Would we be angry, resentful, sad?
- How would we view the rest of the world that we know is wealthier?
- How would we view our own future? Would we resolve to try and change our situation, or would it be too easy to give into the despair? How much would our attitude depend on the type of government we have?

### Activity B.

Organize the class into teams and ask each team to identify one project that is effective in addressing poverty and / or disease. Each team should then make a presentation on the project: what are its goals, the people it is serving, and why it is effective. Students may want to consider some of the organizations below:

Doctors Without Borders <http://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/aboutus/what.cfm>

Oxfam [http://www.oxfam.org.uk/what\\_we\\_do/index.htm](http://www.oxfam.org.uk/what_we_do/index.htm)

Salvation Army

[http://www2.salvationarmy.org/ihq/www\\_sa.nsf/vw-dynamic-index/B62A326A0E61A1EA85256E370074C6D6?openDocument](http://www2.salvationarmy.org/ihq/www_sa.nsf/vw-dynamic-index/B62A326A0E61A1EA85256E370074C6D6?openDocument)

### Activity C:

In addition to supporting debt reduction and Aids treatment in Africa, Bono supports many other causes. Organize the class into 3-4 groups asking each group to choose a cause from the list below. Each group will make a presentation to the class outlining if they judge the cause to be worthy of their support, and if so -- how can they help? If not, why not?

Greenpeace <http://www.greenpeace.org>

Free Burma <http://www.freeburmacoalition.org> <http://www.burmacampaign.org.uk>

Chernobyl Children's Project <http://www.adiccp.org>

Amnesty International <http://www.amnesty.org>

One link <http://www.theonecampaign.org/>

Date link <http://www.data.org/>

### Other Internet Resources

<http://www.u2.com>

(in the upper right hand corner, next to "Site Areas" click on the heart.)

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/4571140.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/4571140.stm) U2 poverty campaign 'was big step'

[http://www.usaid.gov/our\\_work/global\\_health/aids/](http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/global_health/aids/) US Aid link

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/infocus/africa/> Presidential Policy on Africa

<http://www.globaleduc.org/Programs1.shtml> Africa Solidarity Project

[www.abc.net.au/civics/oneworld/convention](http://www.abc.net.au/civics/oneworld/convention)

Convention on the Rights of the Child – international document outlining the basic rights of a child

<http://www.who.int/healthmetrics/en/> World Health Organization, Health Metrics Network – global partnership for better health information