

Empowerment Based Mercy

Summary, Values, Bibliography, Key Points

Summary: Church Based Witness:

The church, just being the church as Christ envisioned it upon the foundation of the apostles, is a transformational presence of holistic restoration in the world. In his *The Politics of Jesus* (1972), John Howard Yoder once re-examined the slogan of the 1948 Amsterdam Assembly “let the church be the church.” Yoder was arguing for the “centrality of the church” as a “social strategy.” According to Yoder, to the degree that the church becomes a “restored society,” it does so *for the sake* of an authentic witness in the greater society. He notes:

The church must be a sample of the kind of humanity which, for example, economic and racial differences are surmounted. Only then will it have anything to say to the society that surrounds it about how those difference must be dealt with. ¹

Our Values:

Bridges of Hope values a holistic gospel of word and deed wherein reconciliation with God through faith in Jesus Christ (spiritual need) and life empowerment in the life of Christ (outward needs) are rightly joined together as the focus of Christ’s ascension ministry today in the power of the Holy Spirit. We are committed to reconciliation across racial, socio-economic, gender and other barriers (Eph 2:8-10; Jas 2:14-17).

Bridges of Hope is strategically committed to empowerment focused versus enablement-focused ministry that honors and values the image of God in every person.

Bibliography:

Bob Lupton:

- *Theirs Is The Kingdom*, Celebrating the Gospel in Urban America
- *Toxic Charity*, How The Church Hurts Those That They Help And How To Reverse It
- *Charity Detox*, What Charity Would Look Like IF We Cared About Results
- *Neighborhood Mapping: How To Make Your Church Invaluable To The Community*

Brian Fikkert & Steve Corbelt,

- *When Helping Hurts: How To Alleviate Poverty Without Hurting the Poor... and Yourself*
- *Helping Without Hurting In Church Benevolence* (an all out guide)

Brian Fikkert,

- *From Dependence To Dignity: How To Alleviate Poverty Through Church*

Wayne Gordon,

- *Making Neighborhoods Whole: A Handbook For Christian Community Development*

John Perkins,

- *Let Justice Roll Down* (an autobiography of racial reconciliation and Community Development- introduction of the “3 R’s”—Reconciliation, Relocation, Reallocation (or Person, Place, Power).
- *With Justice For All: A Strategy For Community Development* (3 R’s expanded)
- *Beyond Charity: The Call To Christian Community Development*
- *Restoring At-Risk Communities: Doing it Together And Doing It Right*

Bryant Myers,

- *Walking With the Poor: Principles and Practice of Transformational Development*, 2nd Edition (2011) Orbis Books and World Vision,

¹ Yoder, John Howard, *The Politics of Jesus*, 2nd Edition (Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, Michigan, (1972), p. 150-152.

Key Points: (from *When Helping Hurts...* Fikkert & Corbett)

Defining poverty is not simply an academic exercise, for the way we define poverty – either implicitly or explicitly – plays a major role in determining the solutions we use in our attempts to alleviate that poverty. If we believe the primary cause of poverty is A, then we will primarily try to B.

- A) A lack of knowledge – B) Educate the Poor
- A) Oppression by Powerful People – B) Work for Social Justice
- A) The Personal Sins of the Poor – B) Evangelize and Disciple the Poor
- A) A lack of Material Resources – B) Give Material Resources to the Poor

The Poverty of Relationships too often neglected strategically, but is the most critical toward an empowerment based result. Being made in God's image, human beings are inherently relational. God designed humans to be a certain thing and to operate in a certain way in all of these relationships. Each of these relationships are a vital aspect of a holistic empowerment effort and must target the "poverty" that might be relevant to each of these relationships.

- A) *Relationship with God* – This is our primary relationship, the other three relationships flowing out of this one.— e.g. *poverty of spiritual relationship with God.*
- B) *Relationship with Self* – People are uniquely created in the image of God and thus have inherent worth and dignity— e.g. *a poverty of being.*
- C) *Relationship with Others* – God created us to live in loving relationship with one another. We are not islands!- e.g. a poverty of relationships (family, church, neighborhoods)
- D) *Relationship with the Rest of Creation* – The 'cultural mandate' of Genesis 1:28-30 teaches that God created us to be stewards, people who understand, subdue, and manage the world that God has created in order to produce bounty.-- E.g. A poverty of stewardship and vocation.

Not all Poverty is created equal. A helpful first step in thinking about working with the poor is any context whether the situation calls for *relief, rehabilitation, or development.* In fact, the failure to distinguish among these situations is one of the most common reasons that poverty-alleviation efforts often do harm the *design and implementation exacerbates the poverty of being of the economically poor – their feelings of inferiority and shame.*

- *Relief* can be defined as the urgent and temporary provision of emergency aid to reduce immediate suffering from a natural or man-made crisis. The key feature of relief is a provider-receiver dynamic in which the provider gives assistance – often material – to the receiver, who is largely incapable of helping himself at that time.
- *Rehabilitation* begins as soon as the bleeding stops; it seeks to restore people and their communities to the positive elements of their pre-crisis conditions. The key feature of rehabilitation is a dynamic of working *with* the tsunami victims as they participate in their own recovery, moving from rehabilitation to "development."
- *Development* is a process of ongoing change that moves all the people involved – both the 'helper' and the 'helped' – closer to being in right relationship with God, self, others, and the rest of creation. In particular, they are better able to fulfill their calling of glorifying God by working and supporting themselves and their families with the fruits of that work. Development is not done **to** people or **for** people but **with** people.

One of the biggest mistakes that North American churches make – by far- is in applying relief in situations in which rehabilitation or development is the appropriate intervention. Avoid the poison of paternalism/maternalism. *Do not do things for people that they can do for themselves.* Paternalism comes in a variety of forms: resource paternalism, spiritual paternalism, knowledge paternalism, labor paternalism, managerial paternalism.

Four Crucial Steps:

1. Identify and mobilize the capabilities, skills, and resources of the individual or community. See poor people and communities as full of possibilities, given to them by God.
2. As much as possible, look for resources and solutions to come from within the individual or community, not from the outside.
3. Seek to build and rebuild the relationships among local individuals, associations, churches, businesses, schools, government, etc. God intended for the various individuals and institutions in communities to be interconnected and complementary.
4. Only bring in outside resources when local resources are insufficient to solve pressing needs. Be careful about bringing in resources that are too much or too early. Do this in a manner that does not undermine local capacity or initiative.