

WHEN HELPING HURTS

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“While the poor people mention having a lack of material things, they tend to describe their condition in far more psychological and social terms than our North American audiences. Poor people typically talk in terms of shame, inferiority, powerlessness, humiliation...” Page 53

“[Bryant] Myers explains that before the fall, God established four foundational relationships for each person: a relationship with God, with self, with others, and with the rest of creation.” Page 57

“Due to the comprehensive nature of the fall, every human being is poor in the sense of not experiencing these four relationships in the way that God intended.” Page 62

“If we reduce human beings to being simply physical – as Western thought is prone to do – our poverty-alleviation efforts will tend to focus on material solutions. But if we remember that humans are spiritual, social, psychological, and physical beings, our poverty-alleviation efforts will be more holistic in their design and execution.” Page 60

Definition of Poverty Alleviation: “The ministry of reconciliation: moving people closer to glorifying God by living in right relationship with God, with self, with others, and with the rest of creation.” Page 78

“First, material poverty alleviation involves more than ensuring that people have sufficient material things: rather, it involves the much harder task of empowering people to earn sufficient material things through their own labor...Second, work is an act of worship. When people seek to fulfill their callings by glorifying God in their work, praising him for their gifts and abilities, and seeing both their efforts and its products as an offering to Him, then work is an act of worship to God.” Page 79

“Our relationship to the materially poor should be one in which we recognize that both of us are broken and that both of us need the blessing of reconciliation...Our perspective should be...more about how we can walk together, asking God to fix both of us.” Page 79

“A helpful first step in thinking about working with the poor in any context is to discern whether the situation calls for relief, rehabilitation, or development.” Page 103-104

- “*Relief* can be defined as the urgent and temporary provision of emergency aid to reduce immediate suffering from natural or man-made crisis.”
- “*Rehabilitation* begins as soon as the bleeding stops; it seeks to restore people and their communities to the positive elements of their precrisis condition.”
- “*Development* is the process of ongoing change that moves all the people involved – both the ‘helpers’ and the ‘helped’ – closer to being in right relationship with God, self, others, and the rest of creation.”

“One of the biggest mistakes that North American churches make...is in applying relief in situations in which rehabilitation or development is the appropriate intervention.” Page 105

Minimum Standards of Disaster and Rehabilitation Assistance: Pages 111-113

- “Ensure participation of the affected population in the assessment, design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the assistance program.”
- “Conduct an initial assessment to provide an understanding of the disaster situation and to determine the nature of the response. This is a little different from loading up a truck of volunteers from your church and running down to New Orleans the day after the levees break. It requires you to know the local context and situation or to be working under the auspices and coordination of those who do.”
- “Respond when needs of an affected population are unmet by local people or organizations due to their inability or unwillingness to help.”

- “Target assistance based on vulnerability and need, and provide equitably and impartially. Note the concern here with precision, making sure that the people who get the assistance are truly vulnerable and needing. Flinging resources around undermines the development of individual and communal stewardship, responsibility, and capacity.”
- “Aid workers must possess appropriate qualifications, attitudes, and experience to plan and effectively implement appropriate assistance programs.”

“Avoid paternalism. Do not do things that people are able to do for themselves.” Page 115

“All of us need to remember that the materially poor really are created in the image of God and have the ability to think and to understand the world around them. They actually know something about their situation, and we need to listen to them!” Page 117

Beginning with Assets, Not Needs: “Asset-Based Community Development is consistent with the perspective that God has blessed every individual and community with a host of gifts, including such diverse things as land, social networks, knowledge...creativity...ABCD asks them to consider from the outset, ‘What is right with you?’” Page 126

“Participation is not just the means to an end but rather a legitimate end in its own right...The crucial thing is to help people to understand their identity as image bearers, to love their neighbors as themselves, to be stewards over God’s creation, and to bring glory to God in all things. One of the many manifestations of such holistic reconciliation is that people exercise dominion over their individual lives and communities.” Page 145

The authors tell the story of working in Indonesia after the Tsunami. It was determined that rather than send in teams of people or cash, it was important to understand the abilities of the local structures and then come alongside the local people to rebuild. Construction companies were the first to receive financial assistance to get back to work first. Had they stepped in to rebuild with western crews, the local construction business would have suffered. Page 155-157

“It has become commonplace in charitable giving to ask: What is the most highly leveraged way to invest money in order to have the greatest impact for the kingdom? The question is legitimate...however, donors need to remember that reconciling people’s relationships with God, self, others, and the rest of creation is simply not the same as producing and selling widgets. Deep and lasting change takes time.” Page 151-152

African Short-Term Mission Story: “Elephant and Mouse were best friends. One day Elephant said, ‘Mouse, let’s have a party!’ Animals gathered from far and near. They ate. They drank...and nobody celebrated more and danced harder than Elephant. After the party was over, Elephant exclaimed, ‘Mouse, did you ever go to a better party? What a blast!’ But Mouse did not answer. ‘Mouse, where are you?’ Elephant called. He looked around for his friend, and then shrank back in horror. There at Elephant’s feet lay Mouse. His little body was ground into the dirt. He had been smashed by the big feet of his exuberant friend, Elephant. ‘Sometimes, that is what it is like to do mission with you Americans,’ the African storyteller commented. It is like dancing with an Elephant.” Page 162

“By definition, short-term missions have only a short time in which to ‘show a profit’. To achieve pre-defined goals. This can accentuate our American idols of speed, quantification, compartmentalization, money, achievement, and success. Projects become more important than people. The wells dug. Fifty people converted. Got to give the church back home a good report...” Page 168

“Stay away from the ‘go-help-and-save-them’ message and use a ‘go-as-a-learner’ message. We need no more STM brochure covers with sad, dirty faces of children and the words ‘Will you die to self and go and serve?’ Such a message places too much focus on the sacrifice the STM team is making to change people’s lives – a level of change that is simply not realistic in two weeks – and on how helpless the poor people are without the team’s help.” Page 176

“...we are all poor, just in different ways.” Page 178