Solving *the* Puzzle *of* Development

Transforming Hearts *and* Minds *to* Change *the* World

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Design and production: abelerdesign.com

The scriptures quoted in this book are from
the English Standard Version (ESV) Bible.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Thom and his wife, Ellen, served as missionaries with a mission agency for the past 20 years, eighteen of which were spent in a West African country, and worked primarily as technical advisors for a Christian-run hospital system.

Thom's involvement with the local churches in the areas of teaching, evangelism, and discipleship during their first few years in Africa, provided opportunity for his technical skills to be put to use through community development, both in designing and overseeing clean water projects for many villages and towns.

Ellen taught reading and English, leading to her becoming a catalyst to start a primary school on the hospital property where they lived.

They currently reside in the US because their service was interrupted by a 2017 civil conflict that erupted in the area of Africa where they lived.

Both Thom and his wife, through relationships developed through their ministries in their country of service, found themselves helping to secure justice for people wrongly accused or victims of crimes. Their combined experiences provided insights included in this book.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Throughout the process of writing this book, I asked a few friends and colleagues to read through the manuscript at various stages. I would like to especially thank Ann Wester, Doug Lewis, Dave Wittmer, Kathleen Fox, Dr. Robert Osburn Jr., and Carolyn Abbott for their insights and helpful critiques. Carolyn, with her amazing editing skills, has also been such a blessing and taught me many things I never knew I needed to know! And the icing on the cake, David Abeler, for his amazing cover and interior design.

It should also be noted that each story I've written about is my recollection of events in each case, and I've related them to the best of my knowledge. I've shared them here to support a point I'm trying to make, and although based on true events, any names that are used aren't the real names of the people involved.

PREFACE

I was in trouble a lot as a child. I always struggled when I asked my parents why I had to do a particular thing or had to go to a particular place when maybe I had other plans or felt it was otherwise inconvenient. They would occasionally answer my question with "because I said so." I never for a minute doubted my parents' love for their children or their wanting what was best for us, but I guess it was just because of the way God wired me that I found it difficult to do things without having an apparent reason. I had to know the why of everything.

It was a bit of a shock to me when God called my wife and me to serve Him in Africa as missionaries. I'd been self-employed as a building contractor, my wife had her own house cleaning business, and we both enjoyed our work. I was teaching the high school Sunday school class at our home church, and my wife was teaching a children's class, and we were working with the high school youth group with another couple. We were very busy, and yet I felt a real pressure that my life priorities were out of order.

All this came to a head one week prior to a missions' conference at our home church. The frustration I was feeling with the lack of time to give to important things and the seemingly confused priorities in my life ended in a small argument with my wife one evening. I believed that the priorities should have been God first, my wife second, and my business

third, but the business kept pushing itself into first place! This led me to pray and ask God what He wanted me to be doing with my life and, through a series of events and conversations, I received a clear answer to that prayer.

It wasn't an answer that I expected even though I can't say I'd expected a clear answer, but if I had, being missionaries probably wouldn't have been on the list.

I was asked in 2001 to work with a technical services dept. of a medical wing of a West African denomination, and my wife was going to be working with hospitality at one of their hospitals. However, the first three years we had there provided us with opportunities that we never expected and were way outside the original job descriptions. We did the work in the positions we were given of course, but we also had a chance to help start several churches, and my wife started teaching some children to read, which led to her starting a school.

I had the privilege of teaching Sunday school for a few years in one of the local churches that we helped start. Following a study we did on the book of James; I challenged the church to think of a project we could do to meet a need in the village. It was through this challenge that I learned how to design and build gravity flow water systems. That ended up as a sideline ministry because clean water was a huge problem for much of the country. Moving down this path began to generate the "why" questions in my mind about the state of development in West Africa. Why does a country like the one we were living in, one that's rich in natural and human resources, still lack basic services like reliable electricity and clean water in the vast majority of cases? Even in the major towns and cities that have pipe-borne water, the water is unfit to drink due to exposure to potential sources of contamination, in some cases, dirt flows from taps along with the water. I was in the capital city for a meeting once and had to bathe in reddish-orange water coming from the public water supply, the same color as the region's clay soil.

I want to clarify that the impetus of our work as missionaries wasn't focused on development or education or the construction and maintenance of medical facilities; it was on the Great Commission, the

making and teaching of disciples of Jesus. Growing God's kingdom was why churches and individuals were supporting us financially and in prayer. It wasn't just about my wife teaching children how to read or my assisting with building facilities where people would receive medical help or providing clean drinking water to help reduce waterborne illnesses. It was our goal, however, to use these activities to provide open doors to the Gospel by showing love for people and concern for their felt and very real physical needs.

More questions began to occur to me as time went on regarding the lack of development despite the abundant available resources. I was especially wondering why sustainable change was not happening after the trillions upon trillions of dollars in aid money that had been poured into countless development projects? An answer began to develop in my mind.

A colleague recommended a book to me early on: *When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty Without Hurting the Poor…and Yourself* by Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert. One of this book's main points is that we should help people become who God created them to be. We can actually rob people of the opportunities to be the salt, light, and witnesses for Jesus that He has called them to be in a broken world by giving them things or doing things for them that they could and should be doing for themselves.

I read many other books over the next few years that began to assemble a picture in my mind that shows an unquestionable link between the lack of development in Sub-Saharan Africa and its society's moral culture. This link is true in every nation and society on earth; therefore, this correlation is also relevant everywhere else in the world.

I want to mention the names of some authors and books that have helped me tie our experiences living in Africa to this conclusion. God used them and their expertise to help reshape our ministry philosophy. I hope that the collection of thoughts and observations in this book will also help others to focus and develop their own mission strategies and choose the missions they support so that the Gospel can be taken more effectively to every tribe, tongue, and nation.

The list isn't exhaustive, but these are some of the main thought contributors for me, in addition to Corbett and Fikkert's book. Every one of these books is worth reading; my references to them are only snippets of great information from fuller contexts.

Ken Eldred

God Is at Work: *Transforming People and Nations Through Business*

The Integrated Life: *Experience the Powerful Advantage of Integrating Your FAITH and WORK*

Robert Osburn, Jr.

Taming the Beast: *Can We Bridle the Culture of Corruption?*

Developing Redemptive Change Agents: *Discipleship That Helps Nations Flourish Rather Than Flounder*

David Horsager

The Trust Edge: *How Top Leaders Gain Faster Results, Deeper Relationships, and a Stronger Bottom Line*

Judith & Sherwood Lingenfelter

Teaching Cross-Culturally: *An Incarnational Model for Learning and Teaching*

Mary Lederleitner

Cross-Cultural Partnerships: *Navigating the Complexities of Money and Mission*

Gary Haugen

The Locust Effect: *Why the End of Poverty Requires the End of Violence*

Neil Hudson

Imagine Church: *Releasing Whole Life Disciples*

Os Guinness

A Free People's Suicide: *Sustainable Freedom and the American Future* (This brings some very important points into the mix.)

Samuel D. Rima

Spiritual Capital: *A Moral Code for Social and Economic Justice*

Each of these authors has shined a different light into a different corner that has added to a deeper understanding of a problem. Each one highlights a different piece of the puzzle that most people and churches want to help solve but who, I believe, have been missing the target for many years. The lack of development in many places has been something that many people have been interested in for years. Love, concern, and a desire to help alleviate the challenges many people face have been the foundation of many missions' trips, the end goal of countless NGO projects, and huge amounts of money contributed by governments.

I've tried to point out some connections that will help more people understand that development can neither be given to people nor can it be bought, because it's a product of values, values that reflect (or don't reflect) godliness. The hearts and minds that are being transformed by God's Word will help bring about the development that so many people want to see happen. Most importantly, that transformation can help the local church grow stronger and increase in number to become a powerful force in the hands of God to build His kingdom and reach the uttermost parts of the earth.

I've been asked by many people who the book's target audience is. That's an implementation challenge for the very reason I was inspired to write it: different worldviews! Thus, the audience for this book is twofold:

1. The Western church, to try to help it become more effective in its involvement in reaching every tongue, tribe, and nation, and,

2. The church in developing nations that have become dependent on the Western church on so many levels that this has kept them from becoming the church God intended them to be.

There are many great churches, pastors, and believers in Africa, but the pews are still full of people who see themselves as limited in potential. I would love to see that change.

We had to leave our country of service in September 2017 due to civil unrest, and we're currently based in the U.S. working with a group focused on Africa. Wanting to continue with the ministry we had in

Africa, I sat down to list a few topics that I felt were important and set out to write a few paragraphs under each. I was hoping that I might be able to develop them into a curriculum. It grew into something a bit beyond that, as you'll see! I've sent the writings as they've progressed both to several of my African friends for review and to a few missionary friends. As a result, this work has been sifted through by many different eyes, worldviews, and personalities, and I'm grateful for all of them.

That's where the inspiration for this book came from. I pray it will be used by God and His people to reach the unreached more effectively with the Gospel, provide opportunities for evangelism and discipleship, strengthen the church, and hopefully, also enable development to happen as a biproduct.

This book is not a story book although it does contain several small stories that I use at times to illustrate different points. For this reason, it may seem a bit disconnected, like a puzzle with the pieces spread out on a table. You will notice that the book is divided into "pieces" instead of chapters. Each piece will be discussed, and I will explain how the individual pieces relate or directly connect to the other pieces as they begin to form a bigger picture. Some pieces are smaller than others but each piece, regardless of its size is important, as it contributes to completing that larger picture.

You may have noticed that I've not named the country of service where we were working as missionaries. This is intentional because the principles outlined in this book are applicable in every country on the Earth where people live.

UNDERSTANDING *the* Many Pieces (Challenges)

The Premise for the Book

Scripture provides a solution for humanity's greatest need: rescue from sin and from our eternal separation from God.

> **Romans 1:16:** *For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.*

For this reason, I want to note that this material is designed for one purpose only: for the spread of the Gospel and the fulfillment of the Great Commission by sharing the Good News with everyone until all have heard it and by making disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:18–20). My wife and I served the Lord and the people for 18 years in a country in West Africa. The mission team in our country of service was always focused on learning how to be more effective in making disciples and communicating the Gospel in the African context. Effective cross-cultural ministry requires an understanding of the "other" culture but, most importantly, it requires identifying disciple makers in that culture, people whose desire is to be used by God to glorify Him and grow His church.

I'm someone who has always loved problem solving, so it wasn't long before I began to wonder why the intended development just couldn't happen there, especially after all the money that's been poured into Sub-Saharan Africa. Rich with human and physical resources, the country

where we were living shouldn't look like it does, and in fact, many other nations fall into the same category regarding the lack of development. So, what is the primary reason that these nations, which have been endowed by their Creator with all the resources necessary to thrive, don't thrive?

I want to draw attention again to this book's goal: that is, to spread the Gospel of Jesus and to increase God's Kingdom by making disciples in all nations, teaching them to obey all that Jesus commanded, which should form a continuous and ever-expanding loop in that process.

That said, it's good to take an honest look at what many U.S. churches consider missions. Much of their time and energy goes into giving people things or doing things for people who can or could, through teaching and capacity building, be doing those things for themselves. If we're honest, and many people may take offense at this, we must admit, unfortunately, that Americans are people who enjoy our stuff, our material blessings, and our ability to go out to eat, go to the movies or on vacations. I think we might even feel a little guilty to some degree when we compare ourselves to other countries where people have very little in the way of material things. This seems to draw people into the ministry direction of meeting that "need."

I don't think we should feel guilty about the things God has blessed us with as long as we don't put our hope and security in them and don't neglect our giving to the Lord's work and His church. At the same time, we shouldn't be content to see others struggling to obtain the basic things of life, such as clean water and nourishing food, good healthcare and a protective shelter to live in, or a quality education that could lead to productive lives, thriving societies and churches by providing more opportunities for employment or businesses, the ability to read and teach others both in and out of the church, and to obtain positions of influence in their societies.

We Christians should empathize with people who are suffering, and we should have a desire to bring relief to their suffering. The Bible has extensive teachings that express God's desire for those who have the capacity to help those who don't. However, there are some key points to remember that will help to keep us focused on the Great Commission's goals.

1. All people, regardless of race, geographical location, nationality, language, or culture, are created equal and in the same image of the same God.

2. If #1 is true in our hearts, then we'll regard people's difficulties with empathy, not pity. Empathy implies a heartfelt concern that's socially horizontal; that is, it identifies with that person or people and is more likely inclined to extend the "hand up" of sustainable assistance, whereas pity looks down on the unfortunate circumstances of others and is more inclined to offer the "hand out."

The old and often-repeated phrase that says, *"If you give a man a fish, he eats for a day; if you teach a man to fish, he eats for a lifetime,"* is a good start for getting us off in the right direction when it comes to meeting the physical needs of those in struggling situations. Societies are complicated, unfortunately, and many contributing factors must be overcome to help those people learn to fish. Sometimes just knowing how to fish isn't enough, especially when political and/or moral-cultural values make fishing very difficult. The fishing example can be replaced with just about any other activity related to productive, sustainable work.

I hope what this book covers will help its readers to understand what some of these complications are and how they contribute to the problems and struggles in underdeveloped societies. More importantly, I hope this will help others to develop ideas and strategies that can be used to grow people's faith, to grow and strengthen their churches, and to creatively introduce Jesus to the lost by using the various gifts and talents that God has given to His people. I also believe that the nonclergy members of the church are an untapped or under tapped resource; thus, much of this book is geared specifically to that aspect of church ministry. Most importantly, it's geared to illustrate how development and human behavior are intrinsically connected. The development will follow if we focus on building a strong and healthy church. We will end up with neither if we only focus on the development.

Ministry and Work

When God created people, He placed them in the garden and told them to multiply and subdue the Earth. He directed them to develop their towns and cities and to produce goods and services for the enjoyment and sustenance of all. God invited them to assist Him in the continuation of His creation. He intended from the beginning that work was to be a part of people's lives, and this is affirmed throughout Scripture in both the Old and the New Testaments.

God intended for man to participate in providing for himself and his family right from the beginning.

> **Genesis 2:15-17:** *The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.*

God assigned something for Adam to do on a continual basis that would lead to meeting his needs. I find it interesting that in the same breath, He gave him the first warning and opportunity for obedience. This is another verse that shows that work and how we do it is still important to God:

> **Ecclesiastes 3:9-13:** *What gain has the worker from his toil? I have seen the business that God has given to the children of man to be busy with. He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, He has put eternity into man's heart, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end. I perceived that there is nothing better for them than to be joyful and to do good as long as they live; also that everyone should eat and drink and take pleasure in all his toil—this is God's gift to man.*

It's noteworthy to see how Solomon saw the opportunity for man to have work to provide for himself and his family as a gift from God.

We'll look at some different aspects of work in the next section, but I first want to define what I'm referring to by the word *work*. Work in this context is talking about the activities that people engage in to earn a

living. It may be by rendering services or producing a product or both. It may be a hands-on activity, or it may be in an administrative role. Work is an important part of every society and is an activity ordained by God by which individuals can provide for, or contribute to, meeting the needs of their families and their society.

Nothing is simple, which is why it's important to try to understand the why and how of things. It's much easier to work on the solution to a problem when you understand the cause. My lengthy explanations and introductions are all intended to bring some clarity into the complex and interconnected economic, political, and moral-cultural conditions that create challenges in every society. Hopefully, they'll help to inspire creativity in communicating the Gospel and discipleship in national churches, because a better understanding is essential of how those challenges can be quite different in cross-cultural settings.

The Three Governing Institutions

Much attention has been given to building infrastructure and giving money and material things to people in hopes of making life better for them and of demonstrating Christian love and compassion through these acts of kindness. Much time has also been invested in theological education for pastors and lay leaders, but I believe there's a missing link that's hindered the growth of many churches throughout the world. It all relates to society's three interconnected systems.

Every society, no matter how materially wealthy or poor, has three different systems or institutions that comprise its governance: economic, political, and moral-cultural. Wikipedia defines economics like this: "An economic system, or economic order, is a system of production, resource allocation and distribution of goods and services within a society or a given geographic area. It includes the combination of the various institutions, agencies, entities, decision-making processes and patterns of consumption that comprise the economic structure of a given community."[1]

The economic system is directly influenced by the political and moral-cultural systems because politics and the moral-cultural system

1 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Economic_system

determine the rules regarding how the economic game is played.

The political system defines the process for making official decisions in the society. This may be a formal government with a constitution or other defining documents or a traditional form of leadership structure, such as a chiefdom.

A brief and very generalized definition of a moral-cultural system is a given society's values that are generally held or accepted by the majority of the population and that dictate what's right and what's wrong.

The formal rules of the political system and the informal rules of the moral-cultural system play a large part in the success (or failure) of the economic system[2]. Trying to address the economic woes of a people or country without addressing the issues in the political and moral-cultural systems will never result in any real change in the people's economic system. I believe that, for many people, the real reason why underdeveloped nations remain underdeveloped has never been fully understood, and this has resulted not only in many underused resources but also in many missed ministry opportunities. We're still learning about the many facets to the big picture, but we've managed to put together several interconnected pieces that I hope will assist others to have a much greater impact in strengthening churches and growing God's Kingdom in their various cultural contexts.

The absence of a Judeo-Christian moral authority that's transformed the hearts and minds of the moral-cultural system of a society leaves the political and economic systems unhealthy, unprincipled, and therefore, dysfunctional. In many cases, Christianity has entered a society and grown to huge proportions in numbers of churches and individuals who would call themselves Christians, yet the transformation of hearts and minds has not happened.

With this in mind, any attempt to solve the problems of poverty in a society without addressing the heart issues is like treating a serious disease symptomatically with pain relievers. Even though there may be some temporary relief from pain, the disease continues its negative effects on a healthy body, or, extending the metaphor, it continues

2 Eldred, Ken (2009). *God Is at Work: Transforming People and Nations Through Business* (pp. 78-79).

creating hindrances to forming healthy and productive societies.

People don't live at church; people live and work in all kinds of places and relationships all week long. They go to their jobs in business, in education, in medicine, in government positions, in law enforcement and in the judicial system. They work their farms, sell goods in the market, drive taxis, and engage in all kinds of activities all week long that aren't in church. I mention this point because most people in the nation where we lived, and, doubtless in many other places, see serving God as something that we do in church. For many people it's being an usher, singing in the choir, teaching, or attending Sunday School and Bible studies, attending all-night prayer meetings, etc., but the idea of serving God at work and in all the other activities we engage in in life is a pretty foreign concept. In fact, it's called the sacred/secular divide, the idea that there are some areas that God really cares about and some that He doesn't.

The Different Aspects of Work

Work can and should be seen as a ministry in the life of a Christian that God can use in powerful ways for His glory.

A common idea surrounding ministry is that it is, as I previously mentioned, something that occurs in the context of the church, and yes, it is. It is important to understand what the church is to better understand this in order to be able to maximize our effectiveness in ministry. We know and verbally agree all the time that the church is the people, members of the body of Christ, and not the church building itself. However, for many of us there is a difficulty in separating the idea of ministry and the church building or some other activity directly related to it. The idea of church life and our personal lives outside of that building are somehow disconnected from each other.

God has created each of us with a unique combination of gifts, talents, and skills, likes, and dislikes, desires, and interests, all given to us to be used as His body for His glory. A very important reason for developing a better understanding of the idea that the church is the body of believers with Jesus as its head is that the body isn't just the body when it's inside the church building or at some other organized church gathering. The church continues to be the body even as its members disperse into their

communities when the meetings and worship services come to an end. The setting of ministry may change but our serving God should continue.

Ministry *at* Work

A commonly held view of what most Christians think about when they think about ministry at work is that they may be surrounded by people with whom they can show the love of God to and with whom they can share their faith. From this perspective, they think about opportunities to develop relationships and share the Gospel as ministry, but they may not think about their actual work itself as a ministry.[3]

Ministry *of* Work

Our work has spiritual value for reasons well beyond providing income to support our churches and missions. Our work itself is a ministry to which we're called. Most Christians in general think that a ministry "calling" means being employed in some capacity as a professional in ministry, such as pastors and missionaries or in other Christian organizations, but all work is holy and ordained by God. Through it we exercise dominion and stewardship of the world and fulfill the creation mandate. Through it we serve our fellow man as we provide goods and services that others need and, as such, our work becomes a ministry to others done unto God.[4]

Ministry *to* Work

God has certainly put His people into positions in which they can introduce others to Him, but His desires go further. We are to be salt and light in the world in order to redeem all that's in it.

> **Matthew 5:13-16:** *You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It's no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet. "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill can't be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way,*

3 Eldred, Ken (2009). *God Is at Work: Transforming People and Nations Through Business* (pp. 304-05).

4 Ibid. (pp. 80-81)

let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

Other verses also point out that not only is work important and ordained by God, but it's also part of His plan for our own provision and for giving to others.

2 Thessalonians 3:10-12: *For even when we were with you, we'd give you this command: If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat. For we hear that some among you walk in idleness, not busy at work, but busybodies. Now such persons we command and encourage in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living.*

Christians can be an influence as redeeming agents in the workplace in both its organizational structures and their policies. They can influence how business is conducted in the marketplace and politicians can influence how legislative decisions are made. In so doing, their behavior and actions can work to redeem the schools, governments, churches, and businesses themselves.

One may think that it may seem a bit ungodly to dive so deeply into the ideas of politics and economics in a discussion about ministry, but here are some points and observations that will help bring it into better focus.

First, as a reminder, this material is designed for the purpose of spreading the Gospel and strengthening the church; it isn't about the money. However, as mentioned earlier, we all recognize that there are people living in this world who are materially poor and who struggle with everyday issues of food, healthcare, education, and general living conditions. People everywhere want pretty much the same thing: to be able to feed, clothe, educate, and otherwise provide a decent life for their families.

God's intention from the beginning was for humanity to thrive in the world and in relationship with Him. Much of ministry already revolves around the "meeting of needs" around the world as missionaries and short-term teams go to various countries. These trips include building

projects or distributing food and clothing and many other activities regarding the physical needs. Many of these trips and ministries may also introduce Bible teaching, children's programs, showing the Jesus video, and many other spiritual activities. However, again, I think there's a huge opportunity to have a much deeper and more effective ministry by helping people and churches (as a group of people) make a much greater impact themselves in sharing the Gospel and growing into stronger churches by introducing lay people to, and equipping them for, ministry opportunities they may have never thought about before.

Many things should be understood to really grasp the need for this idea and to understand some of the complexities of cross-cultural ministry. Our mission team always focused on ministry goals for evangelism and discipleship. We put much time and effort into growing our knowledge and expertise as cross-cultural workers so we could increase our effectiveness in God's hands to accomplish those ends.

The following topics will help establish a better understanding of some of the whys and interconnections between things that are hidden to many who want to help spread the Gospel in the cross-cultural context.

Understanding Culture and Worldview Impacts on Societies

I'll use the word *values* frequently when discussing culture, so I want to take some time to clarify its meaning. Values are the things in our lives that we hold as important or that have worth to us. They can be tangible things, such as a car, a home, or other physical things. They can be preferences such as a style of clothing or decorations in a home. They can be personal desires or goals, such as having lots of money or professional success. Other values may be moral qualities, such as being a person of integrity or living a God-honoring life. Some values are more important to us than others; some values may be something we hold as individuals, while other values may be shared within our cultural group. The values that we hold, regardless of the source, are a big part of who we are as people. These values not only shape the way we understand life and relationships, but they also guide our decisions. They're also a large part of what makes up what we call a person's worldview.

I originally wrote the outline of the next section a few years ago as a

devotional for one of my turns as a member of the hospital management committee. The topic of culture and worldviews is applicable to every nation and society on earth. It's one of the most essential subjects to be aware of when working or teaching cross culturally. You could miss important points or miscommunicate altogether without understanding or, at the very least, being aware of another culture's worldview! I hope this can begin to produce an awareness of the importance of cultural differences for those who have never spent extended periods of time within another culture.

Some Definitions of Culture

- Culture refers to the collective knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, religion, notions of time, roles, spatial relations, concepts of the universe, and material objects and possessions acquired by a group of people in the course of generations through individual and group striving.[5]
- Culture is symbolic communication. Some of its symbols include a group's skills, knowledge, attitudes, values, and motives. The symbols' meanings are learned and deliberately perpetuated in a society through its institutions. (Institutions as referred to here would be social institutions or patterns of social order focused on meeting social needs, such as government, economy, education, family, healthcare, and religion.)
- Culture comprises explicit and implicit patterns of and for behavior that are acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievement of human groups, including their embodiments in artifacts. The essential core of culture consists of traditional ideas, especially their attached values; on the one hand, culture systems may be considered products of action, and on the other hand, conditioning influences upon future actions.
- Culture is the sum total of the learned behavior of a group of people that's generally considered to be that people's tradition transmitted from generation to generation.

5 http://people.tamu.edu/~i~choudhury/culture.html

❖ Culture is a collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another.

Every group of people around the world has what is called their culture. Some countries with a lot of ethnic diversity may have a general overall culture with many subcultures within the general culture.

The country where we lived, with its 250 different ethnic groups, is an example of that. We could see into the land areas of six different language groups from our back veranda, each with its own histories and traditions. This area also has three primary religions: African Traditional Religion, Christianity, and Islam. Several of the different tribal groups have stories about how they had relocated from other areas and were given places to settle by the larger tribe already residing in that area. The larger tribe gave them land and designated the boundaries. These groups each have their own chiefs or traditional leaders who rule their group, but they, in turn, are subchiefs to the larger tribe's leader.

These tribes collectively have many general cultural values within them that produce some commonality, but then each has its own individual traditions and values regarding important areas of life, such as marriage, death, sacrifices to the ancestors, special spiritual holidays referred to as "Country Sundays," etc. These are some of the things that give them their own individual cultural character within the general culture. There's also a people group called the Fulani, traditional Muslims who migrated from the Niger Basin across Sub-Saharan Africa in the 11th century. They share some of the same geographical area, but they have a unique set of cultural values, so they wouldn't really be considered a subculture.

The subject of culture can produce lots of questions! Where have our cultures come from? How long have they existed? Do they change? Are cultures good or bad? How does culture impact our lives? More importantly, how does God's Word affect our culture or how does our culture affect God's Word in our lives? Which one is more important? Which one is more powerful?

The attitudes, values, and beliefs that we collectively call culture unquestionably have a role in human behavior and progress, sometimes for good and sometimes for bad. It's interesting to note that those attitudes,

values, and beliefs that reflect godly values promote development, while those that don't reflect godly values hold development back.

Another interesting and important thing to note is that the institutions that develop within a society will obviously reflect its cultural values. Governments, judicial systems, and economic systems will all behave just like the people who run them, the people who think and behave as their culture shapes them. What does this mean? If people generally behave corruptly and selfishly in their culture, there's no way that their institutions will function well because those individuals will take those same behavioral patterns to work. People who behave in a way that reflects godly values, with honesty and integrity are also involved in institutions that will run well and will serve the nation well.

> **Matthew 7:17-18:** *So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit.*

Where Do Cultures Come From?

Another important thing to understand is that different cultures have developed under different conditions. Most cultures were developed long before God's Word and the Gospel formally reached the people in the various cultures. The men often referred to as the Founding Fathers in the United States were largely believers in a higher moral authority, either as deists or as followers of Jesus Christ, when the U.S. Government was first being formed. They knew that the government they were attempting to form as they wrote their Declaration of Independence and designed the Constitution and Bill of Rights would be very fragile and had to reflect godly values for it to function well and survive. They knew that godly values and the moral behavior of the people would be the key to that survival. That was made clear as they tried to reflect that ideology when designing those documents. People lived and worked in ways that reflected those values for many years, and God blessed the nation's development.

However, pride in man's success began to rise after 200 years of growing prosperity, and the limits on freedom that had kept it from

becoming anarchist, provided by Judeo-Christian values, began to come under attack with increasing intensity. Today, after nearly six decades of growing pagan influence, the U.S. culture now condones abortion, killing over 62 million unborn children since 1973.[6] Homosexuality has become a mainstream lifestyle. Prayer in schools was ruled unconstitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1962, and reading a Bible publicly has come under attack. These events have resulted in the moral decay of America's current culture. Culture is a powerful force, but culture can also be altered by changing values, for both good and bad.

A culture was already firmly entrenched in the various societies in the country where we lived in Africa, where the Gospel had only reached its shores in the mid-1800s and slowly spread throughout. The question now is, how much influence have the Gospel and God's Word had on those who claim Christ as Lord and Savior? One only needs to examine the condition of the society, the justice system, the way various government ministries function and how strong the economy is to arrive at a conclusion.

It becomes clear, then, that even if the Gospel has spread throughout the nation and even if thousands of churches have sprung up among many different denominations, the transformation of hearts and minds by the Spirit through the Word has been lagging far behind. The Apostle Paul wrote in Romans 12:2 that we are not to be conformed any longer to our previous life patterns, but by examining God's word to learn His values, we can begin to see the areas in our personal and cultural values that need adjusting and make those changes, being transformed into the likeness of Christ.

> **Romans 12:2:** *Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*

West Africa has many wonderful Christian leaders. There are also many who believe that there's a strong connection between Western

6 www.lifenews.com/2021/01/22/62502904-babies-have-been-killed-by-abortion-since-roe-v-wade-in-1973.

culture and Christianity and that it was something that the colonials and missionaries tried to use to make Africans become more Western or to control them. I have personally heard people refer to the Bible as the white man's book on several occasions. This idea isn't as strong as it used to be, and many churches have done well in making the church their own. However, I still see comments on social media that show this idea is still present in the minds of some church leaders. This thinking is disturbing and incorrect. It's also a compelling reason why the focus needs to be on the development of national church leaders whom God can use to build His kingdom in their own cultural contexts.

I'll look next at some cultural value comparisons, opposing worldviews and how they can potentially affect development.

Language Challenges

First, I want to share a hypothesis about how cultural values can affect how we process information in our daily lives by using an analogy to computer operating systems.

An operating system (OS) is the most important software that runs on a computer. It manages the computer's memory and processes along with all of its software and hardware. Whether it's a Mac OS or a Windows OS, the underlying hardware is essentially the same, made up of somewhat common building blocks. Depending on the OS, the system takes in data, makes decisions according to a predefined logic, and then performs accordingly. The human race similarly shares the same "hardware," or physiology. There are differences provided by race that may produce a different looking exterior, and just like computers, people come in all sorts of shapes and sizes. However, just like operating systems, our cultures have different ways of interpreting input data based on our traditions and cultural worldviews. People from different cultures may, therefore, have a very different understanding as they hear information or an expression presented by a different culture. Idioms and syntax can produce very different meanings even if they're speaking the same language. An example of this is in Luke 10:10,11 and Matthew 10:14, when Jesus sent His disciples out and told them that if they weren't received well by a village, to move on and even wipe or shake the very dust of that village

from their feet. People from a Sub-Saharan country who may struggle to keep their own shoes clean from the dust in the dry season will likely not understand the impact of that statement in their context. For this reason, in the translation into the tribal language that is spoken in the area where we lived, the translators used the phrase "remove your foot from their compound," because that will convey the meaning of showing scorn or having nothing to do with those people. It's the same message but two very different ways of expressing it in two different cultures: The operating system of one doesn't recognize the meaning of the input from the other, which could result in an unintended response. For the sake of argument, idioms can be explained and their true meanings understood by those who could, in turn, teach others. However, what if the Scripture is just placed into the hands of someone who can read the language but isn't running the right operating system? The text may not be properly understood, and the end result may not be the desired one.

Another parallel we can develop from the operating system analogy is that of software patches. Software may sometimes have inherent flaws

in the code that cause it not to function properly. The addition of new software applications that are loaded onto the machine may sometimes cause problems or conflicts in the operating system. The operating system providers will then often provide a repaired code, or "patch," that's designed to mitigate the problem. We may discover issues in our operating system that are in conflict with becoming Christlike as we as believers begin to grow in our knowledge of God's Word and are actively engaged in the process of sanctification. It's in these places that we may need to make adjustments, or apply a patch, to how we behave or respond in order to bring our values in line with God's perspective.

Vocabulary is another important point to consider concerning language that's related to cross-cultural communication. A language develops its vocabulary out of necessity and practicality. Words in every language convey the ideas, actions, emotions, and names of physical objects that are relevant to life. It facilitates the necessary communication among the people in that society. Bearing this in mind, it may be that there are words in one society that don't exist in another because the objects or ideas they refer to don't exist for them. This is an important point to remember for someone who wants to teach cross culturally. A friend of ours who taught for many years at a seminary in the same country told me of a short-term volunteer who was visiting from the US and was overheard teaching a class. I have no idea what the subject was and that isn't important here, but he was using "condominiums" as an example for something at some point during his class. Generally speaking, a national from this country would have no idea what a condominium is, but that isn't the only problem. In this classroom full of students, the question probably arose in the minds of many, if not all, of them, but one nobody asked, "What is a condominium?" First, who would ask the question when he or she might be the only one who doesn't know and be embarrassed? Second, who would want to make the teacher feel bad by pointing out that his example isn't understood? Africans are a gracious people and will often keep silent so as not to offend, but in a case like this, the lesson might be great but the point is completely missed because of a communication problem. This is another supporting point for the focus to be on empowering nationals.

If people generally behave corruptly
and selfishly in their culture,
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because those individuals will take
those same behavioral patterns to work.

Opposing CULTURAL Values

Religion

I want to look now at a few different and opposing cultural values on the same subject that are also present in different cultures. This section was inspired by a chapter in Ken Eldred's book, *God Is at Work: Transforming People and Nations Through Business.*[7] The opposing cultural values listed here are from this book. The commentary unless otherwise noted is mine. We will also see what effect they have on a society's political, social, and economic development. I also want to examine and compare which cultural values best reflect God's Word and how those values can be more beneficial to their society.

- ❖ Religions that exalt poverty promote values that are resistant to development.
- ❖ Religions that view wealth as a blessing promote values that are favorable to development.

It's wise to note, however, that the Prosperity, or Health and Wealth Gospel, has bad theology behind it, selecting only verses that seem to support it. It's a self-serving theology that focuses on man receiving blessings rather than God receiving glory. The Prosperity Gospel is very popular in Sub-Saharan Africa, because it closely resembles how African Traditional Religion views the relationship between God and man. I'll discuss this in more detail later.

7 Eldred, Ken (2009). *God Is at Work: Transforming People and Nations Through Business* (p. 83).

Rejecting wealth as sinful is sometimes espoused by some Christians based on the biblical teaching against the love of money, or chasing after wealth, making it the desire of the heart. Liberation Theology promotes the idea that you are blessed by God if you are poor. Many verses in Scripture point out the futility of trusting in wealth.

> **Ecclesiastes 5:10:** *He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves wealth with his income; this also is vanity.*
>
> **Hebrews 13:5:** *Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, "I'll never leave you nor forsake you.*

These are just a few of the verses that emphasize the fact that trusting in God and His promises is where our hearts should be focused, not on the money. Many verses are also related to giving and being generous, yet it would be difficult to give or be generous if we had nothing from which to give. Money itself isn't bad; in fact, money can be very necessary if certain ministries are to operate. As missionaries, we depend on others' generosity to meet our ministry's financial needs. The denomination we worked within in West Africa has also sent out their own national missionaries. That never could have happened without those churches that give generously to support that vision. I believe that a healthy economic system that can provide jobs and opportunity for Christians is one of the neglected areas when we talk about church strengthening.

I mentioned earlier that we believe that part of church strengthening is for Christians to be givers to their local churches so they can pay their own pastors, sponsor their own programs, and send out their own missionaries. Unfortunately, many churches and Christians in Africa believe that they're supposed to be the receivers of assistance, which is God's provision in their lives. There have been many times when a project was proposed in a village or a church and the first question asked was how they would find a funding source; the idea of them paying for it themselves wasn't even given a thought. I believe that some, if not most of this thinking, has been an assumption that comes from the many

teams of people who have gone there doing projects and giving things over the years. One of the things that got me heading down this road to investigate why there's a lack of development was the statistic that said that more than $35 Trillion dollars had been spent in Sub-Saharan Africa over the past 45 years. Virtually no sustainable change and few meaningful changes have occurred in the people's living conditions even though all of this money has been spent. The idea of just giving things to people and doing things for them when it's not necessary can do much more harm than good and can foster an attitude that they themselves can't or shouldn't do it.

Trust in the Individual

Wow! Now here's an important topic, trust! Trust is more valuable than gold, slower growing than a forest, and yet more fragile than glass. It's a value that's personal, one that can't be bought; we're not born with it, yet it's essential for us as Christians if we want to have an effective ministry. Trust can only be earned, and it isn't given to you automatically in most cross-cultural settings, but it may be assigned based on the experience they've had with it from others who've come before you. Trust may be withheld completely in many cases based on that culture's own worldview regarding individual trust.

- ❖ Distrust of the individual, demonstrated by excessive oversight and control, typifies the society that resists development.
- ❖ Societies that trust individuals are favorable to development.

Trust isn't given out much in Sub-Saharan Africa and definitely not freely; in fact, distrust of other people is the norm. Why is that? Well, it's primarily because one of the core values in African society is getting ahead as an individual, gaining power and influence. Power, unlike freedom, isn't easily shared.

Here's a story of a situation in which I was mistrusted by a merchant. I'd purchased things from him several times before, but we didn't really have a personal relationship. I'd ordered some electrical cable to carry the power from the hospital powerhouse out to the site where we were building our house on the hospital's land many years ago. At that time, cable like that

was usually from remnants of rolls and had to be bought in the port city, so the cable arrived at our local building material supplier's shop in several smaller coils.

I needed and had ordered 600 meters of cable for our project, so when I went to pick the cable up, I'd brought just enough money with me to pay for that quantity. The shop owner told me when I arrived that because the cable was in several smaller pieces, they had sent 618 meters instead of the 600 meters I'd requested. I told him that that wouldn't be a problem, and that I'd take all of the cable that had come, because we'd be able to use it in in the hospital at a later date. I then told him that unfortunately I'd only brought with me enough cash to pay for the 600 I'd ordered. He immediately became very skeptical and implied that he wasn't sure I would come back. I was a bit taken back by that and told him that I'm a Christian and a... but he quickly interrupted me and said, "Christians lie all the time!." I was really shocked by that statement because my assumption was that when I said I was a Christian, that should have immediately elicited a sigh of relief from him. He did finally agree to "trust" me, and I did return the following week with the additional money. Today, Robert, the shop owner, is a good friend who would send me anything I might need on credit, knowing that I'll always pay him. In fact, I developed that type of relationship with many businesspeople over time. On several occasions, if the hospital administration asked for credit from a few of these people, the people would call me to see if I would assure them that they would be paid. There is, sadly, an automatic distrust within the culture.

One of the reasons is that the ability to collect money owed is difficult, if not impossible, as it is wherever the justice system is ineffective and certain technologies may be lacking. However, I still contend that being a Christian should be synonymous with trustworthiness.

Our hospital had recently spent a substantial amount of money to purchase security cameras and hard drives to record the video from the cameras. These cameras were set up in several areas of the hospital to observe workstations and supply centers to ensure that people were working and to ensure that goods weren't being stolen. It's a sad situation, given that the hospital is a "Christian" institution staffed by people who

would mostly claim to be Christians. First, the need to have the cameras says a lot about the lack of transformation in the people's hearts, but second, it says a lot about the lack of trust and trustworthiness, even in a "Christian" workplace.

Africans desire to get ahead in life, just like most people in the world. The difference is that people may become jealous of others, rather than being happy for and encouraging someone who wants to improve their circumstances. In some cases, other people will seek to undermine the aspiring individual. This causes many people to go underground, so to speak, and be very careful about letting others know what they're doing. People develop a protective shell of distrust rather than a mutually encouraging atmosphere. Not much can thrive in a culture of distrust. I see trust and trustworthiness as a primary starting point in discipleship because it's one of the first places in a person's life that transformation will become evident.

> **Colossians 3:9-10:** *Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.*
>
> **2 Corinthians 8:21:** *For we aim at what is honorable not only in the Lord's sight but also in the sight of man.*
>
> **Proverbs 11:3:** *The integrity of the upright guides them, but the crookedness of the treacherous destroys them.*

I recommend a book written by David Horsager, called *The Trust Edge: How Top Leaders Gain Faster Results, Deeper Relationships, and a Stronger Bottom Line*, to conclude this section. David wrote this book based on his graduate work regarding trust and now has a business that helps leaders and businesses grow, deepen their relationships, and become more successful. The book really drives home the importance of trust, and he has broken the subject down into what he refers to as the "8 pillars of trust." Trust, he points out, isn't a soft skill and isn't just a virtue but is a table or foundation for all the virtues to rest on. To underscore this point, he points out that "Trust, not money, is the currency of business

and life."[8] The reason that we have faith in God is based on the fact that we trust Him. With that in mind, we must begin by being trustworthy ourselves if we want to be effective disciples of Jesus or be involved in discipling others and making disciple makers.

The Moral Imperative

In African culture, people with a high social position or people who have wealth can pretty much break certain laws if they choose to, without fear of consequence. We lived about 20 miles from the largest town in our region of the country and the commercial center where we did a lot of our shopping. On one of our trips into town, there was a well-appointed Toyota Landcruiser parked right in the middle of the road in front of a popular grocery store. It was a shop that sold many items that were expensive by local standards and was primarily patronized by expatriates and nationals of means. All the parking spaces along the road in front of the shop were full, and since the owner of the vehicle clearly had money, why not? The traffic continued to flow up onto the raised median and back down in front of the vehicle, and I thought to myself, "*There's a person who clearly sees himself as important and who can do what he wants."* This behavior may not seem to have any immediate or clear consequences on the health of the society, but it surely does.

- ❖ Cultures that resist development indicate a great divide between their official laws and everyday practices.
- ❖ Cultures that promote development have a common morality (general behavior) that's more closely aligned with its nation's laws.

When my wife first started the school on the hospital compound, she and I, along with the hospital administration, formed a school committee. Other members were some parents and additional appropriate members from the hospital staff. At that time there were many who understood what it meant to be a Christian in everyday life. They knew the value both

8 Horsager, David (2012). *The Trust Edge: How Top Leaders Gain Faster Results, Deeper Relationships,*
and a Stronger Bottom Line (p. 20).

of order in society and of following the rules that had been created for a good reason. The main motivation for starting the school was because the other schools in the area, those operated by the government and by religious denominations, were all lacking regarding any kind of quality education. There was great support for enforcing order in the new school for this reason. There were several reasons for those existing schools' lack of success in providing quality educations for the children. One was the lack of commitment to time schedules during the school day, which was evidenced by the fact that almost every school had children running around outside at any given point during the day. Another was that many school policies set by the government were ignored, such as the age requirements for entering school. Many parents were sending their three-year-old children to Class One, even though the law for that class was six years of age. This age requirement is pretty much standard throughout the world and was established based on children's mental development and their readiness to begin formal education. Unfortunately, school served as childcare for most employed parents, which was the primary argument used for disregarding the age requirement.

The hospital's primary school operated under all the same government regulations as the other schools did, with the exception that the regulations would be enforced because they would be beneficial to the children's education. The actual reason for starting a primary school at the hospital was because my wife had been tutoring several children in reading at our home after school. Many of those children began to rapidly improve, and the parents of those children then began to talk about it with some of the other parents they worked with at the hospital. Those parents also wanted their children to have a good education, which was a challenge for them, because the hospital was a tough place to live. It was in a rural setting with no private schools like those available in the major towns. The large towns had many private schools available, so the parents who could afford it would send their children to them. This meant that educating their kids could be a real hardship when someone was posted to work at this hospital.

Most of the parents had no problem accepting the official age-limit rule for starting Class One once the reason for the rule was explained

to them. However, several of the doctors who worked at the hospital complained loudly to the administration: They felt the rule should be bent for them because they were doctors. That's how it's normally done. Despite their complaints, the administration stood its ground and told them that if they didn't like the rules, they could take their children elsewhere. This same battle was fought for ten years as new people were transferred to work at the hospital, but the administration and school committee continued to stand firm. Several of the original staff who were present at the time the school was started eventually either retired or were transferred to different locations. Then, sadly, the original vision was lost and enforcement of the school policies grew lax as new people came in. It began by allowing one policy to be compromised which, in turn, inspired other demands to be made that led to the breaking of many other policies. The quality of the education basically collapsed in a matter of weeks, literally due to the loss of order in the school.

The school is still there, but the earlier excellence of the education is long gone. I want to note that from the first year the school was open until year 10, it received an award from the national Ministry of Primary Education for having the highest academic achievements of any school in the entire division. The school never received another award after the 10th year, when the school fell into disorder and the policies fell by the wayside. Part of me is glad about that, because it was hard evidence that maintaining rules, laws, and policies designed for the good of society are necessary. However, part of me is sad that, even though the doctors were happy to be respected in their demands as big people, it was costing a lot in terms of their children's futures and the futures of the school's other children. This was also frustrating for the other parents who saw the value in those policies but had no say because of their lower social positions. The sad reality is that bad behavior can be perpetrated by a few, but the consequences will often affect many.

This is yet another cultural value that's contrary to biblical values and is one of the main reasons Africa doesn't develop. You can begin to see how the transformation of a cultural value can have a great and positive impact on a society. Imagine if Christian people in positions of influence allowed the Word of God through the Holy Spirit to transform

their hearts and minds! What an influence they could be for the Gospel and as contributors to a strong church! These people who worked tirelessly to get the rules bent for them in our hospital would all tell you they're Christians. I've heard several of them lead devotions, and many can quote Scripture fluently, yet where is the transformation?

1 Peter 2:13-17: *Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor.*

Romans 13:1-5: *Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there's no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you'll receive his approval, for he's God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he doesn't bear the sword in vain. For he's the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer. Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience.*

Philippians 2: 6-8: *Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death— even death on a cross!*

Views of Competition

Corruption of the economic system and the style of the education system make it difficult in Sub-Saharan African culture for much to happen in terms of legitimate competition in business and development. I've known people and known of people who have launched an ambitious business only to have it taxed or bribed out of existence.

- ❖ Societies resistant to development have negative views of competition, often under the pretense of fostering equality.
- ❖ Societies favorable to development view competition as necessary and good for the creation of wealth and excellence; it's what drives capitalism and democracy.

The following story demonstrates the challenges and frustration that many people face when trying to start a business and to attempt to improve their personal economic situation.

The sad reality is that bad behavior can be perpetrated by a few, but the consequences will often affect many.

I once met a young man named Isaac who was employed as a parking meter attendant by the largest town in our region. I'd parked that day across the road from a shop I wanted to go to but didn't have any coins for the parking meter. Isaac happened to be nearby, so I asked if he could make change for me. He said he didn't have any, but at my request, told me that I could put the money in the meter when I got back from the shop. Upon returning just a few minutes later, I found that my tire had been chained because the meter was expired! Looking up the road, I saw the guy who was doing the chaining, a different person than Isaac, who was a few cars up the road chaining someone else. I tried to explain to this guy what had happened, but the trust thing was obviously an issue. Fortunately, Isaac was on his way back down the road in our direction, and when he arrived, he told the tire chaining guy the same story I'd told, and the chain was removed.

I thanked them both for doing their jobs and commented that this country is blessed to have people who are serious about their work. Isaac then told me his story about how he has a degree in business

management, but here he's working as a parking meter attendant. He said he came from a family with little means but had recently graduated from university with a degree in business. After graduating, he learned that the government was sponsoring a program that was supposed to help stimulate the economy by helping people start businesses. He hoped to receive some assistance from that initiative to start a cooperative for people who would be raising agricultural chickens for meat. He went to the office to enquire about the process and picked up his application for the grant. After completing his application and putting together the required business plan on how he would start the business and how it would profitably function, he was surprised when the person who was in charge told him that he would only accept his application if Isaac gave him 400,000 francs (about $670.00). Isaac told him that he wouldn't be there trying to get assistance if he even had that much money!

Several different possibilities could be going on in a situation like the one Isaac experienced. Either there were people receiving money who really weren't entitled to it under the program and were paying bribes for the privilege of getting some, or the person being paid to administer the development program was only interested in the "development" of his own pocket. In either case, the government initiative was being subverted at the administrative level, presenting a clear example of how corruption can prevent economic development.

I sometimes think that the education style of memorizing information, rather than learning theory and critical thinking, is also a factor that hinders economic growth because it also limits creativity. I observed a limited variety in the vast majority of the workplaces that comprise the nation's economy: its street sellers, small market vendors of assorted goods, produce, transportation (taxis and motorcycles), tailors, building products, and small businesses like manufacturers of furniture or metal products such as security gates. The traditional methods of teaching the basic skills needed for life are learned by watching and replicating with minimal if any theory being taught. That inhibits creativity. There's

a "way" that things are done and have always been done, and that's primarily how information is transferred.

Some individuals, though, are born with the gift of cognitive thinking, but they represent a small segment of the general population. I would say this is generally true throughout the world, not just in Africa. The general population is limited in its ability to come up with new ideas or expand on those they already know without the teaching of the theoretical and scientific principles about how and why things work. I want to be clear that this has nothing to do with how intelligent an individual might be but, instead, with the particular types of intelligence they may be gifted with and the further development of those intelligences through appropriate education. More on that later in "Whom to Target as Disciple Makers."

> **1 Corinthians 9:24:** *Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it.*
>
> **Colossians 3:23:** *Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men,…*

Notions of Justice

In the country where we lived, based on our experience, justice for many must be bought. This means that if you are financially well off or able to scrape together enough money, you might be able to get justice. In many cases, if you hire a barrister (lawyer in British English) and your opponent also hired his own, the barristers will come together and work out a deal that benefits both of them, not necessarily their clients. I want to be fair and say that there are also some good and honest people in the country's legal system, but they're few and they don't really have a broad influence in the courts. I know some good judges (or justices) and state counsels (prosecutors) who believe in the law and rightly try to adjudicate by it, but there are others who are clearly on the take and only respond to political or social pressure or money.

- ❖ Societies where justice is reserved for the rich lack moral and social capital and are resistant to development.

- ❖ Societies where there's justice for all have a higher sense of moral and social capital, which leads to stability and trust in the economy, which promotes development.

We gained a lot of experience with the judicial system while living in our West African country during the 18 years we were there. This provided us with the opportunity to stand up many times for justice for different individuals who had been wrongly accused of crimes and once for a group of young people who never would have had justice otherwise. The case of this group was particularly disturbing and difficult for us, because it involved people we knew personally, so it hit us close to home, literally.

It was several years ago, and we learned about a situation regarding the sexual abuse of some young people from a friend. It turned out that there were many involved. We were angry when we learned about this; in fact, I don't think I'd ever been that angry before in my life. The reason we were so disturbed was because we had relationships with many of those involved and when we asked our friend what they were going to do about it, the unhesitating reply was, "What can I do about it? I'm poor." That response shocked us and hit us very hard, and I tear up even now as I remember the feeling of helplessness in her voice that even we felt when they said that. Then they also told us that there were others we knew who were also involved. I told them that I wanted to take them to the local authorities immediately.

Upon arriving and talking with the person in charge, I explained the situation and told him that I'd brought them, together with some of their family who had been molested by this person, and that we'd been told that there were several others who had also been abused. He seemed interested and assigned someone to take statements from both parents and their families. This was done on a mechanical typewriter by a person who had no idea how to type and could only tediously pick and poke the keys, so the process took several hours. He ran out of forms at one point in this process, I was told that if the interviews were to continue, I would have to drive down the road to a small business that had a copy machine and pay to have some more forms copied. This was very frustrating!

To make a long story short, at the end of the interviews, our friend and her friend and their families all came outside, and I asked them what the official had to say. They told me he said nothing. Frustrated, I went back inside to ask him what was next, and he said, "Well, you said there were more victims." I was somewhat taken aback by that and asked what they would do about the perpetrator. I told him that although there were more victims, I would think that the seven who have given their statements would be enough to at least have the man arrested. Over the next few days, we contacted all of those involved and their parents, and I acted as a taxi service, driving them all to the local law enforcement post to give their stories. We decided to do this because we were told we'd have to pay the transport for them to go to the victim's homes themselves. We finally got the process moving and after six months and nine trips to the court, the molester was convicted and sentenced. The sad part was that nothing would have been done had we not become involved. This is because the wheels of the justice system can turn very slowly without the grease of cold, hard cash, or in this case, our intervention. For this reason, many materially poor people have little hope of justice. Most of these people who work in the courts and in the police would tell you that they're Christians, and in fact, many did as I spoke with them.

I've been to the offices of divisional officers, and different police stations, and sat in judges' chambers and interrogation rooms on several occasions with friends who were wrongly accused of crimes or who had people conspiring with court officers to steal their land. In each case, had we not been there for them, they would have ended up in prison or without their land to farm. The saddest part of this is that there are many people who face a system conspiring against them who have no advocate.

Throughout this journey, I've also met several good lawyers, state counsels, and justices, and others in positions of greater influence. I introduced many of them to the idea of organizing a formal group of like-minded individuals that could support and encourage each other in doing the right thing in their professional positions. I will talk about this in more detail in Putting It Into Action (page 106) , but since I will mention it several times before then, and it had already begun to form, I

wanted to give a brief explanation of what I will be calling an "Integrity Group". I bought them some of the books that had been an inspiration to me and engaged them in conversations about how godliness and joining together in supportive groups would, first, honor the Lord, and second, make the country a better place to live.

We have a good friend who's an influential businessman who genuinely desires for the nation to develop economically. He has tried for many years to bring investors into the country. He's told me several stories similar to things our friends experienced but on a much grander scale. These are stories of fraud or misinformation that have cost businesspeople hundreds of thousands of dollars, yet there's no legal protection for them. There were no repercussions for the people who committed the fraud or spread the misinformation. I told him that the reason why people are afraid to invest in many countries like this is because there's no legal protection for them. The lack of godliness in a society has huge consequences for both the political and economic systems of those societies. Imagine what an impact people in positions of influence could have if they would choose to live for Christ and stand up for godly values in their places of influence. The lack of godliness and unjust behavior has a negative impact not only on the physical aspects of life but also on the spiritual. What a testimony transformed lives would be to the Gospel! Here are a few verses that provide us with some of God's thoughts on justice.

> **Deuteronomy 16:18–20:** *You shall appoint judges and officers in all your towns that the Lord your God is giving you, according to your tribes, and they shall judge the people with righteous judgment. You shall not pervert justice. You shall not show partiality, and you shall not accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and subverts the cause of the righteous. Justice, and only justice, you shall follow, that you may live and inherit the land that the Lord your God is giving you.*
>
> **Acts 10:34:** *So Peter opened his mouth and said: "Truly I understand that God shows no partiality,…*

Psalm 106:3: *Blessed are they who observe justice, who do righteousness at all times!*

The Lesser Virtues

"Values" and "virtues" can be confusing terminology. I described values earlier that *The Cambridge Dictionary* defines as the principles that help you to decide what is right and wrong, and how to act in various situations. Virtues on the other hand are defined as good moral qualities in a person or the general quality of goodness in a person. The important thing to understand here is that virtues are the product of values. Virtues, as the definition states, are good or positive behaviors produced by good values. However, it is important to understand that bad behaviors can also be produced by values that aren't good or positive; these are called vices. Both good and bad values play a major role in the health and development of a society because of the behaviors they produce. Over the centuries, Greek philosophers identified Justice, Wisdom, Courage, and Moderation as the four natural virtues, and the Apostle Paul identified the three virtues known commonly as the Theological Virtues in **1 Corinthians 13:13:** *So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.* What are sometimes referred to as the lesser virtues, then, are more specific behaviors acted out in the course of daily life that reflect good values.

- ❖ Development-favorable cultures that are more respectful of others' needs value the lesser virtues of doing a job well, being punctual, showing courtesy, and creating order.
- ❖ Development-resistant cultures focus on self-interest and place less value on these (types of) virtues.

Sub-Saharan African culture is unfortunately represented on the negative side in all these cultural value comparisons, presenting a pretty bleak picture for those countries' further development.

In the primary school's classroom, every hand is up, and everyone is shouting "sir, sir, sir," or "ma, ma, ma." No matter how many times my wife would ask them to raise their hand quietly to be chosen, they just couldn't do it. At a bill-paying window in the hospital, four hands would

be pushing their medical books through the clerk's window at the same time; thus, the old, weak, or timid would wait a long time for service. The airport in the port city set up control stanchions with retractable straps to guide people to the immigration inspector stations, but anytime that space allowed more than one person, there was a crowd.

"Africa Time" is a term used to describe the attitude in Africa that time doesn't matter, and most people are typically late for anything with a set starting time. This can be overlooked at times, because most activities in life are generally not tied to clocks, but it often causes issues for some who have other commitments on their schedules.

The behaviors I've just described are things I could never get used to, because I always felt there was a lack of concern for others behind it. There's little or no regard generally extended to others in what we'd refer to as common courtesy.

These are probably the most obvious behaviors that betray a lack of transformation in the general population of Sub-Saharan Africa. To be fair, this is a generality with many wonderful exceptions. Our pastor in our African church used to complain that when he had meetings with the local pastors' association, he would be on time, but others would be significantly late; he would say that there's no respect for other people's schedules. He was a busy guy and being efficient with his time was important to him. There are many other people we know personally who respect others in this regard and, interestingly, they're also the strongest and most committed Christians we know. It's evidence that culture can be adjusted as people grow in grace as followers of Jesus.

> **2 Peter 1:5-7:** *For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love.*

> **Colossians 3:12:** *Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, …*

Authority

I mentioned earlier that people who have high positions or money in countries in Sub-Saharan Africa can pretty much live life as they please, as if the rules don't apply to them. However, there's another effect of this cultural permission, and that's how it affects the poor.

- ❖ Power is held by rulers whose wills are changeable and sometimes unpredictable (because influenced by bribes or other pressures) in societies less inclined to progress.
- ❖ Power resides in the law, and governments are subservient to it in societies favorable to progress.

There's a sense of entitlement, so to speak, in the minds of the rich and famous: They expect special treatment wherever they go. That also exists in the US and in most other societies, but in African society, there's a flip side to the same coin whereby poor people can be subjected to abuse by the very systems that should offer protection. That's where heart transformation could make a major impact for the church.

One day I received a phone call from a friend. He told me that the gendarmes were in his office with an arrest warrant for another friend of mine. He wanted me to come to his office immediately. The person under threat of arrest was a close friend who regarded me as a father. His own father had died when he was young, and even his wife called me her father-in-law! I was told when I arrived that there had been an incident up on the hill above the small village where he lived. His mother had been a leprosy patient at the hospital several years before and even though she was from a different tribal area, she'd settled in a nearby village, and the chief of this tribal land had given her a plot of land to farm for as long as she wanted. There are people placed in positions of oversight by a tribal chief within the tribal land area to ensure that the chief's wishes are carried out and respected regarding land matters and any permissions granted to individuals or villages by him. In the case of this friends' mother's land, the man who was in this position was a corrupt person who was using his position and the government court system to gain land for himself.

It was March, near the end of the dry season, and people were preparing their farms so they could begin planting as soon as the rains would begin. My friend, his wife, and his brother had gone up to begin preparing their mother's farm when they discovered that the person who was in the place of land oversight had built a wooden fence around his own plot of land and had also extended it right around their mother's land and another person's plot. They called a carpenter to come up and saw a few boards out of the fence so they could get into their mother's land to work it.

According to the arrest warrant, some cows had entered through the hole they had made in the fence and had eaten all of the crops in the fence builder's adjacent farm. It also stated that my friend and his brother had been served a summons to appear at the court to be given a chance to defend their action but that they had not responded to the summons. The arrest warrant was being served for that reason. The gendarme and I were familiar with each other, and he also knew I was familiar with the some of the court officials, so I asked him if I could take my friend to the court myself the following day, and he agreed to that.

Both good and bad values play a major role in the health and development of a society because of the behaviors they produce.

The next day we arrived at the office of the department that had issued the warrant, and the person in charge was quite surprised to see me. I told him why I was there and what I knew of the situation with the land and the fencing around my friend's mother's land. I reminded him of the fact that there was absolutely nothing growing in the accuser's farm that the cows had supposedly eaten because the rains had not even started yet. I also asked him why they would register a complaint like that and then issue an arrest warrant without even sending somebody to go look at the alleged crime scene for themselves! He waffled around a bit and then he told me that the warrant was for their refusing to come defend themselves when they were summoned. I told him that my friend said they had never received any summons. He then told me he was busy and had to leave. He said that if I wanted to take him and his brother back with me, I would have to sign a surety for

the equivalent of 2,000 dollars that I would have to pay if they didn't show up for court, and he left.

While the secretary was filling out the forms for me to sign, she motioned to my friend and his brother to come to her desk. She began pointing to some things in the case file, and as she was talking to them, they were shaking their heads. They told me later that she was showing them that the arrest warrant was issued on the same day the complaint was filed. No summons had ever been sent. After leaving the court, I went to the government authority's office in the jurisdiction where my friend's mother lived. Inside, we were welcomed by the senior government official for her subdivision. He was also a friend of mine whom I'd encouraged in his leadership, prayed with, and discussed issues of integrity with on several occasions. He was eager to get involved and contacted both the civil authorities in the court and the chief of the tribe involved, and the matter was finally resolved. The sad part is that if I'd not inserted myself into the situation, the bribe to the court and the false claim would have resulted in my friend's mother losing her land and possibly he and his brother serving some time in prison or being forced to pay a large fine. We also learned that the accuser had done the same thing several times before to others who weren't so fortunate. He ultimately lost his position as a land steward, but there were no further consequences for filing a false report and absolutely nothing was said regarding any court officials who were complicit.

This is a common practice in societies in Sub-Saharan Africa where the wealthy prey on the poor and the law is twisted or ignored to the advantage of those with money or power. A tiered system definitely exists in which decisions are made one way for people perceived to be important and another way for people who are perceived to be unimportant. My friend told me that people like him and his family are seen to be like chickens. There's nothing you can do about it if someone high up in the system decides he wants to kill you. Many of the people who behave this way are also in leadership positions in the church; even the court official told me once that he was a Christian. Given that, what message or mixed messages are being given regarding the Bible's teachings? Is it any wonder that Christianity easily becomes a religion based on

works, conducted through programs or attendance at meetings? If the Word was penetrating people's hearts and bringing about transformation towards godliness in their everyday behavior, especially in people who are in social positions where they can exploit the culture for personal gain, would this not give more credibility to Scripture for the rest of society? This has become the goal for starting an "Integrity" group. Here are several verses relating to authority and social status:

> **Mark 10:42-45:** *And Jesus called them to him and said to them, "You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.*
>
> **Deuteronomy 1:16-17:** *And I charged your judges at that time, 'Hear the cases between your brothers, and judge righteously between a man and his brother or the alien who is with him. You shall not be partial in judgment. You shall hear the small and the great alike. You shall not be intimidated by anyone, for the judgment is God's.*
>
> **Proverbs 14:20-21:** *The poor is disliked even by his neighbor, but the rich has many friends. Whoever despises his neighbor is a sinner, but blessed is he who is generous to the poor.*

View of Life and the Future

The goal of adjusting cultural values must aim towards a godly worldview if the current worldview is counter to God's word. I've heard many people who have engaged in short-term missions say, "We must change their culture." The goal of transformation in people is to make them look more like Jesus, not to make them look more like another culture, to see them grow in grace within their own culture, reflecting Jesus to others in their daily lives.

- ❖ Cultures that resist development view life as something that happens to a person; there's a degree of fatalism and resignation, and the future is beyond one's control.
- ❖ Cultures that favor development view life as something that is engaged; there's an ability to influence future outcomes.

I think that what we're really talking about in this particular value comparison is hope or the lack of hope in an individual's outlook on life. This could be influenced by different factors, such as the state of the economy, the type of national leadership, or their religious beliefs, to name a few. So often I've heard people say things like, "If it's God's will," or "The Lord is in control," when talking about a current situation that's causing stress in people's lives. Now, I certainly believe that both of those statements are true. However, I often reply, "Yes, but God allows us to make choices, and sometimes those choices get us in trouble."

An education system that doesn't teach the why and how of things can also contribute to a fatalistic view of life. We can resign ourselves to accept whatever comes our way when we don't have the creativity to come up with alternatives to consider or methods of prevention to put into practice to solve life's daily challenges. This could certainly destroy the hope that someday life will or could get better.

The Bible teaches us that there's a correct way to live and that living outside of that way can lead us into all sorts of troubles. It also teaches us that God cares deeply about us and promises to provide for our needs if we trust Him and seek to honor Him in our lives. For example, in Matthew 6:33, in response to physical needs, Jesus taught us to seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things, referring to food and clothing, would be provided for us. Many people working in the marketplace are, unfortunately, willing to go to great lengths to increase their personal gain by unscrupulous methods. Putting one's fingers into a measuring cup to displace products like rice and beans and using false weights on scales are some popular methods used to cheat people. You do what you think you must do to provide for your own needs when the elite are getting richer and you have a family to provide for.

One of the ideas for forming an integrity group is to try to restore hope and confidence in the system from the top down. As the system is now, the idea of individuals taking actions that can change the outcomes of life is unrealistic, so the adage, "If you can't beat them, join them" drives many at the lower financial and social levels to behave as they do.

There are also contrasting economic viewpoints that can lead to these contrasting values: the idea that wealth is finite and distributed among a population or the idea that wealth isn't finite and can be created. The first of these viewpoints could lead people to feel frustrated or desperate if they didn't have much money. This can lead to various forms of cheating or theft out of desperation in order to put some of that wealth into their own pockets. The second viewpoint that believes wealth can be created would more likely inspire people to engage in productive activities. Farming, furniture making, or other forms of industry that produce food or goods that would be appealing to others would encourage people to work.

I believe that if those people who are in positions of influence began to live differently, or if those who already live godly lives would take a public stand for godliness, that would do tremendous things for the testimony of the church. It would also go a long way towards providing a sense of hope for others who are lower on the social ladder.

> **Jeremiah 29:11:** *For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.*

> **John 15:1-5:** *I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.…*

The compared values we've looked at in this section are certainly not exhaustive, but I hope I've given enough information to make the point that there are deeply held values and worldviews that have a very real impact on daily life and development. As a clarification, I want to point out that all cultures have many positive values and many wonderful qualities, so the values that I've focused on are primarily those that directly affect sustainable development, a healthy economy, and a productive and protective government. My hope is that this will help guide people who desire to be more effective in promoting sustainable change in the infrastructure and living conditions of people in underdeveloped countries. It's interesting, too, that God's word has something to say about everything, whether directly or implicitly. That's not surprising, though, because God designed and created everything, and He has given us wise instruction through His word about how to live well in His creation.

God has also commanded His people to represent Him well in the lands where He has placed them so that His kingdom will grow through His church, His people, and so that He will be glorified through their good works.

> **1 Peter 2:9:** *But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.*
>
> **Ephesians 5:1:** *Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.*
>
> **Matthew 5:16:** *In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.*

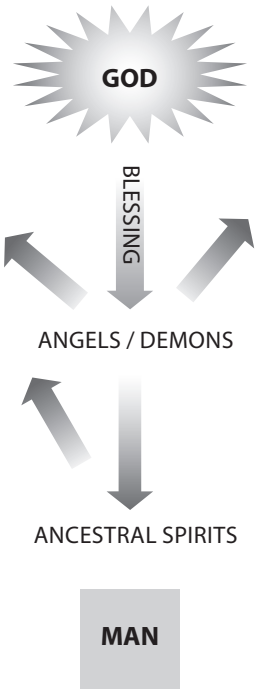
What kind of influence can, and should, God's people have in the society where He has placed them? Couldn't the nation where we were living, and others, become a bright light in a dark world if God's people allowed His word to transform their character to be like Jesus? The

Apostle Paul implies in Romans 12:2 that because people are born and raised in a particular culture, they'll assume the traits and values of that culture.

> **Romans 12:2:** *Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*

We all have values that influence our general behavior and the decisions that we make daily. Paul gives us a command in this verse that when we become followers of Christ, we're to examine those values by comparing them to God's Word. Then, if we find areas that are in conflict with what the Bible teaches, we should make the necessary adjustments so that our values will now reflect godly character.

The most exciting thing about all of this is that there's hope; hope for everyone and for every situation! That hope lies in one place and one place only: in Jesus Christ. When we, as His people, submit ourselves to the authority of His word and allow the Word of God to do a transforming work in our lives, the world around us will reap the benefits from that spiritual transformation.

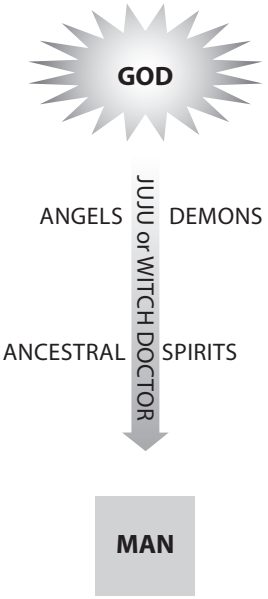


Understanding the African Traditional Religious Worldview

I'm someone who was from another culture living in a West African country, so there are many things, even after 18 years of living there, that I still don't completely understand. This is especially true regarding how people think and make decisions, and that's ok. In fact, it's one of the reasons that I feel it's so important to limit the role of expatriates in ministry and teaching and to focus instead on developing national leaders. I know that, as an expatriate American, I'll never completely understand the culture completely and that I'm probably not even close. You will

never have to convince an African that there's a God; they know that. However, traditionally their understanding of God is quite different from the God of Christian theology.

In the African Traditional Worldview, God is a distant but benevolent God who sends blessings to the people. However, there are two layers of interference with those blessings that must be dealt with for those blessings to flow. Angels and demons are one layer, and the ancestral spirits are another. Both must be appeased and overcome for the blessings to happen.



The witch doctor or Juju is a person who can help facilitate this, for a price. Witch doctors can also provide other services; for example, one person can employ him to put a curse on someone. Many times, if an illness occurs to a person, it can be attributed to a curse that was placed on them. This would also require the services of a Juju for healing or removal of the curse that's causing the illness. The following is a diagram to help understand these relationships.

The role of God in this worldview is primarily to provide for the needs of the people; people don't serve God. The same relationship to God or the same theological perspective has unfortunately been carried along by some people into the church. Nevertheless, if you were to ask these people, they would identify themselves as Christians.

God is still the benefactor who provides blessings in their lives even as this theology has come into the church. However, there are now many "prophets" and those claiming to be "prophets" who have a special communication with God to get those blessings to flow in people's lives. They have become a substitute of sorts for the witch doctor. Once again, in all fairness, there are many other Christians who don't follow this teaching and believe that they have direct access to God through Jesus alone.

This theological position has opened the door for the Prosperity Gospel to sweep across Sub-Saharan Africa. It has also inspired the practice of some charismatic worship and prayer styles. We have seen and heard people doing battle in the spiritual realm, calling for the demons to be bound in Jesus' name in all-night prayer sessions or praying with the entire congregation out loud at the same time. We have been told that if a person couldn't stay awake for an all-night prayer session, it was because they weren't spiritual enough. We were told during discussion with a friend that these are very powerful forms of prayer that would cause God to act.

The following is a copy and paste from a Facebook page of somebody we know well. This post is one that circulated by sharing and reposting and didn't originate with them. This person grew up in the Baptist church and works for the denominational health board. She was one of my wife's first reading students in 2001 and has had lots of exposure to good Bible teaching. This is the post:

The following is another post by a person claiming to be a prophet. "When I was Praying, God told me to give you this Prophecy. Don't ignore this serious prophetic word. I prophecy as I am led, in the next 24 hours, a Mega Financial door is opening for you. I don't know how God is going to do it, but I declare, the more you Share this Prophecy into your Facebook Groups, the more Financial Doors shall Open onto you. You will testify tomorrow by this time."

I noted the dates on both posts were at least 5 days prior to my reading them, with no follow-up posts regarding any miraculous, or otherwise, blessings received by anyone.

My mentioning a bit of the person's background is in no way intended to point any blame to either the place of employment or the church to which they belong. I personally know and highly respect the pastor who was at the church she attended for many years while this person was growing up. However, I do want to point out the powerful hold that culture can have over a person, especially when supported by the greater group.

Another interesting and telling thing to be seen in this post is the theme behind it. It's about improving the quality of one's life in a tangible way, receiving some sort of material blessing that will help to improve the condition of one's life. I believe that this desire, one that all people have, is intensified in the lives of people who live in underdeveloped countries and tend to struggle with those basic everyday needs and are seeking some relief. This can make them more vulnerable to this kind of teaching.

I believe that this can also be a perfect teaching opportunity. It can be used to help people understand the real reason that those difficult challenges that they face exist. It can also be used to teach the biblical values that can truly bring about the transformation of hearts and minds and lead to those better living conditions while simultaneously strengthening the church.

Another challenge was that people who were employed by the health board were required to attend church. Every year each employee had a review, and "Christian Activities" was a line item that was evaluated. A good review was based on their church attendance and certain other church-related meetings. For some, this qualified them as having a good relationship with God. This practice can also remove any motivation for transformation of personal values because their perception is that godliness is achieved through works and church attendance.

Some Bold Examples

Several years ago, a close pastor friend of ours in our host country

recognized this theological problem in the church and took it upon himself to challenge tradition by interviewing and hearing the testimonies of those who wanted to be baptized. This was to ensure that they truly had a personal relationship with Jesus prior to their baptism. It has been a long-standing tradition for children to be baptized before going off to secondary school. It caused quite a stir and created a lot of pushbacks when he started to screen the candidates and deny some of them baptism because they had no conversion testimony. Why? My guess is that for many people, baptism is one of the steps to becoming a Christian. Interfering in this long-standing tradition could have negative spiritual consequences for the unbaptized as they head off to secondary school if Christianity for them is works based.

I mentioned earlier that I've often seen and heard arguments between Africans about the Bible and its application in African culture. Some refer to it as the white man's book, and some say it was just a way for the Colonials to control the Africans. I believe, however, that the argument stems from the cultural conflict that arises when certain godly values and biblical doctrines are taught. This supports my thinking that developing and empowering national leaders is key to true church growth.

Many African pastors and lay people do have a deep understanding of God's word and its application in daily life, but I would say that they're certainly not in the majority. In all fairness, I think that's also true in the USA. Nevertheless, there's a difference, I think, in that Africans are culturally much more naturally spiritual because of the intrinsic connection between African Traditional Religion (ATR) and daily life. This directly impacts the physical realms of health and prosperity. I also think that, for the same reason, regarding biblical teaching and the challenges it can pose to traditional thinking, it may seem like a much more personal attack on the culture because of that deep connection to physical life itself. The following story is an example of cultural conflict and the division that can be hidden until a challenge arises to an important cultural tradition.

A few years ago my wife's friend was killed in an accident when her husband was taking her to work on his motorcycle. Her husband,

also our friend, was injured. She worked as a nurse at our hospital, and he worked with the Ministry of Education in our subdivision. Both of them were committed Christians and very active in the church. They had recently built and moved into a new home just up the road from the hospital. According to ATR tradition, when a person dies, they're buried in the compound where they lived, and their spirit is believed to continue to dwell there. Tradition also requires that certain rites must be performed in a newly built compound before the deceased person's spirit will dwell there. These rites had not yet been performed at their home because their house was new, and nobody had been buried there yet. Our friend wanted his wife's death and burial to be a testimony to their Christian faith and didn't want to have any traditional rites performed. He was overwhelmed by many people wanting him to arrange for the rites to be carried out to prepare the compound for her burial according to tradition. This only compounded his grief as he was lying injured in the hospital. It was interesting to see that quite a few of those people who were pressuring him about those rites were members of local churches who would say that they themselves were Christians.

Death and burial are important parts of ATR because the ancestral spirits are important to everyday life. Every burial, even after the initial rites in a new compound are performed, requires additional rites to also be performed and sacrifices made to satisfy the spirits of the deceased. We have been to many burials when the Jujus, or witch doctors, were there or had been there to do their traditional rites. A pastor would also do his part as a representative of Christianity if the deceased person was a Christian or church member. This, of course, would normally be expected because not every member of every family is a believer, and syncretism, the merging of the two religious faiths' practices, is very common. ATR plays a part in the everyday life of Sub-Saharan Africans, so there will always be immense pressure from families regarding tradition because of its depth and importance in their life. We saw it firsthand in this particular case with our friend. People were in a divided uproar over the things that needed to happen versus what our friend wanted.

Cross-Cultural Points to Ponder

So, returning to my overarching intent in this book, who would be better equipped, and who would more likely be listened to, when it comes to biblical teaching in a cultural clash such as this? For an expatriate to challenge the culture would more than likely result, once again, in a "You don't understand, you're not from here" response, whereas a respected national leader wouldn't experience that cultural barrier.

I think that one thing that can happen when the Bible is taught across a cultural divide and ideas arise that challenge cultural traditions and beliefs is that the hearer's first reaction might be defensiveness. They may quickly dismiss your lesson because you're not from there and just don't understand. I've encountered this on numerous occasions with people I've worked with, people who have a variety of levels of formal education. It includes those who have only been to primary school up to and including those who have been to university. The education system in the country where we lived focuses mainly on memorizing information and being able to repeat it back to pass the test. I've personally seen that there may be many people with a variety of degrees or certificates in any number of subjects but little functional ability in those same subjects. For this reason, you can raise compelling arguments in discussions with people in an attempt to prove a point, but you may make little headway if that person isn't a creative or critical thinker. Just because someone may have a degree from an institution of higher learning doesn't automatically imply that they're creative and critical thinkers. Instead, they may very well be great memorizers. For this reason, it should be noted and attention paid to the fact that there will be people who graduate with a knowledge of biblical theology through memorized facts and stories in places such as seminaries and Bible studies that are hoping to train leaders. They haven't grasped its intended implications in daily life, so they'll be challenged to pass it along in meaningful ways to those who may sit under their teaching later. I also think that a works-based religion is more likely to form in these cases, as well, because

One thing that can happen when the Bible is taught…the hearer's first reaction might be defensiveness.

the theoretical aspects of the application of the biblical principles will be missing. Life can be very abstract, and its challenges and problems aren't always clear cut, so the ability to discern appropriate applications at the appropriate time can't always be memorized. For this reason, it's much easier to create generalized religious programming that will satisfy a congregation. Unfortunately, this will also hinder their true growth in their walk with the Lord.

Another challenge is that expatriate visitors who may desire to teach in Sub-Saharan Africa who aren't aware of these details, may come, teach, and leave without having the desired impact they intended and never realize it. African culture is a culture of respect and social class. Visitors who have taken time out of their lives and traveled halfway around the world to be there will likely receive a very warm and wonderful welcome when they arrive. They may have a similar send off when they leave, but what they said and what they tried to teach may have gone in one ear and right out the other, so to speak. That's due to the cultural barrier that exists because "you're not from there." However, there are some special people with that gift of cognitive and critical thinking who will get it. I'll talk about that in the section about whom to target as disciple makers and why.

Christian Culture and Economic Development

Technically, I hesitate to say that there's a such a thing as a Christian culture. I think it would be better to say there are cultures that have been influenced by Christian values. As people's lives are transformed by God's Word, that culture reflects Christian values. I've often heard people say in reference to cross-cultural work, "We need to change their culture." I believe this is because many people don't actually understand what cultures truly are. I believe that this is an especially important point to make, particularly for those whose cross-cultural experience is limited to short visits or none at all. Short-term trips are likely to reduce any understanding of the local culture to a superficial exposure to things like food, dress, art, or local architecture.

To think along the lines of there being a general Christian culture would make us more apt to miss or disregard the complexities that exist in those cultures that are new to us when we become involved in

ministering in them. Our approaches to communicating, our teaching styles, and our application of God's word to everyday life would likely be the same as we'd use in our own culture because they're familiar and make sense to us. However, those methods and styles may not translate very well into another culture, and that could make our efforts less effective. Think about your own language: it's filled with idioms, things that don't mean what they say literally but we know what they mean. Sayings like "off the top of my head" or "on the tip of my tongue" are examples of this. Many expressions also relate to things whose significance only people from that culture can truly understand. Culture is complex and is a powerful force in people's lives that should never be minimized or disregarded if we want to have effective ministries.

Not all aspects of any culture are good, and not all aspects of any culture are bad; all cultures have both good and bad attributes. All people are created by God in His image, so their cultures will reflect both attributes of God and attributes of humanity's sinful, fallen nature. Our objective, then, as Christians desiring to share the good news of Jesus by starting and strengthening churches and seeing those churches reproduce, is to keep in mind that we aren't trying to make people who look like us culturally. Instead, we want people who begin to look like Jesus in their own culture. Our desire is to help people to understand God's word in ways that will enable the Holy Spirit to transform their culture in the areas that don't reflect God's values.

> **Romans 12: 2:** *Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*

I previously mentioned in the second section about work and ministry that every society incorporates three systems: the political, economic, and moral-cultural. I talked about how moral-cultural values have a direct and profound impact on both the function and health of a society's economic system. The USA was founded as a constitutional republic with an economic system based on free enterprise, or capitalism. I'll touch on both of these systems in more depth later, but I wish to note now that both of them can function well only in a moral-cultural system based on

Judeo-Christian values. This republic allows for personal freedom, the ownership of private property, and government leadership that comes out of the general population rather than from a royal lineage, and it was designed to have limited powers. For personal freedom to be healthy in a society, it requires those people to be very conscious of their actions and to be respectful of the freedoms of others. This isn't "normal" behavior for human beings who are by nature selfish, so without some sort of restraining principles for guidance, freedom can become very messy. Godly principles given to us in God's word, when lived out in the lives of people in a society, allow that society to function well as a free society.

A capitalist economic system is also a system that can function well only within the restraints of good behavior. I was told many years ago by a business mentor that nobody is friends when it comes to money. Whether you are paying for a service or a product, lending money to someone, or borrowing money from someone, the dynamics of that relationship will change. You may not fully agree with that, but sadly it proves to be true more often than not. Capitalism is the USA's economic system which, like freedom, is susceptible to failure, not because the system is bad but because of how it's conducted. Business can be practiced from one of three possible moral attitudes: *immorality, amorality,* or *morality.*[9]

Which Basis for Morality?

The ideas in the following section are drawn from Ken Eldred's book, *"God Is at Work: Transforming People and Nations Through Business."*[10]

Immorality would be characterized by businesses that are illegal. Organized crime, drug trafficking, child pornography, and sex trafficking are examples of immoral businesses. This type of business leads to fraud, bribes, violence, and extortion, and this type of business model isn't a sustainable solution to a society's economic challenges for these reasons.

Amorality, the second possibility, is often found now in Western society's business practices and is often taught in business schools. The questions they ask aren't if it's "right or wrong" but is it "legal or illegal." The problem with this type of business model is that trust and loyalty

9 Eldred, Ken (2009). *God Is at Work: Transforming People and Nations Through Business* (pp. 74-95).
10 Ibid.

become foreign concepts, which only calls for the creation of more and more laws and regulations, which makes business more expensive and conducted in an atmosphere of suspicion.

The third option is a business environment that functions within a moral standard. Integrity, service, and loyalty are the values held because it's morally right, not because they're mandated by law, because they're not. Trust is developed and businesses can thrive because people can work and serve others more joyfully and cost-effectively. This model is more sustainable and productive for a society. Morality is a vital part of a successful economy.

The question now is, what should be the basis for morality? Capitalism must be joined with a culture of morality to counterbalance the immoral and amoral versions of the system to function properly and provide the most benefit to individuals and societies.

Once again there are three possible options, this time as a basis for morality itself: self-interest, a secular universal ethical code, or the revelation of a higher Judeo-Christian moral authority.[11]

Self-interest as a source of a moral code can certainly work when a business adopts certain policies of honesty and quality for a successful business, but it could quickly make exceptions if there was a possibility for greater gain. Self-interest is too quickly led astray because it's subjective to the circumstances at hand, e.g., honesty is the best policy vs. honesty being the only policy.

A universal ethical code is a reaction to the understanding that some sort of guidance is needed in life, but it looks more to international institutions as a source. Lacking a means by which true heart transformation can occur, it also lacks a motivation for people to internalize such a moral code. The United Nations is an example of how impossible it is to unite the nations of the world in a common purpose and concern for each other.

The third source of a moral standard, the higher authority of God, has the power to transform man's consciousness. Followers of the Judeo-Christian faith choose loyalty, honesty, and fairness, not just because this

11 Ibid. (pp. 74-95)

is in their best interest but because they're ultimately accountable to the Almighty God. Only a moral standard that subjects itself to God's authority has lasting power.[12]

Understanding the Education System in Many Underdeveloped Societies

The education system is one of the most powerful systems that we found remarkably interesting during our 18 years living in West Africa.

Most underdeveloped societies have a dominant learning and teaching style. By underdeveloped, I'm referring to societies that aren't overly complicated by technology and where people tend to live simpler lives. Their knowledge base doesn't need to be as broad but is usually more specifically inclined to the skills needed to live life.

They may learn to hunt, fish, farm or whatever other activities are required for survival and meeting the daily needs of the family. They typically don't vacation or have many extravagances in life, and most of their knowledge is passed on from their mother or father or an older sibling in a sort of "If you do it like this, it works" style: Memorize what to do, and you have the skills you need for life. For example, there are likely no lessons on plant structure, photosynthesis, or other scientific theory given when learning to farm, because that really isn't necessary to be successful.

Formal education and schools were introduced to these societies and were built when many of these countries were first colonized. The colonists also provided the teachers. Many years later as the countries began to receive their independence, the expatriate teachers were replaced with nationals. We observed that older adults who had gone to school in this country prior to their independence generally seem to have had a higher level of a critical thinking type of education than the younger generation has.

This seemed especially true in rural areas where there are no private schools such as those found in the cities and large towns. I believe that one of the primary reasons for this was the result of the influence of the colonial government because it used the same teaching style that's

12 Ibid. (pp. 74-95)

typically used in the West, teaching lots of theory. The teaching style began to be what is more culturally typical when the education systems were taken over by the national governments. It was a real eye-opener for us when my wife started the school on the hospital compound. Their primary focus was to have the kids memorize information for the purpose of repeating it back on an exam. There was no theory whatsoever being taught, and when my wife tried to introduce some different ideas to make the teaching more creative, they were pretty much rejected outright. It was the same thing we'd run into when trying to explain certain things regarding other challenges to development: "You don't understand because you're not from here."

We knew in the beginning, when the school was being formed, that we'd have to take steps to protect the school from being held back by the behaviors that were keeping so many other schools from being effective. Most of the government or denominational schools would allow three-year-old children into Class one, and in most of those schools you would see children outside running around at any point during the day. Most schools in our country in West Africa are administered by a single individual, the headmaster. We felt that it would be important in the hospital school to have the ideas for the policies for the new school to be understood by the people whose children would be the attending the school. We thought that the best way to do this would be to start a school committee involving the hospital administration, some parents, my wife, and me that would hold the headmaster accountable to the school policies.

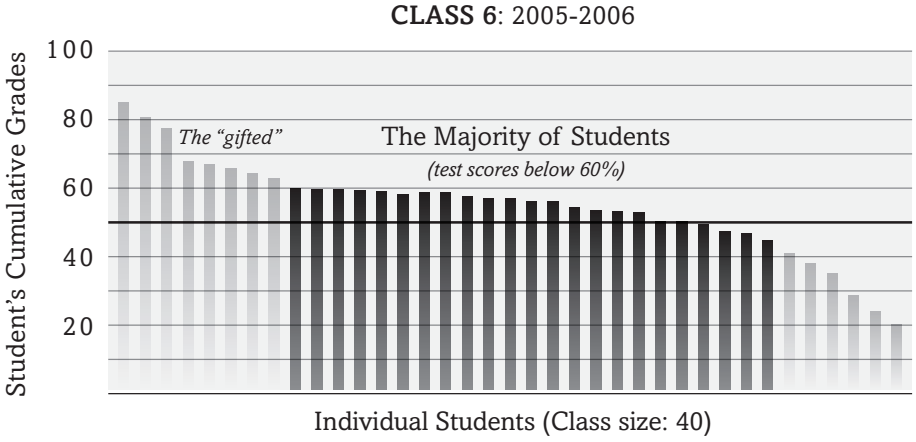
Gathering Statistics

At one point we decided to begin documenting the grades from every exam given at the school going back to the time the school was started and continuing for several years after. At one point, a young couple who had come to visit our hospital because they were considering medical missions was looking for something to do, so we asked them if they could enter all this collected information into Excel spread sheets. Our hope was to show that the children's grades would automatically begin to show improvement by our maintaining order in the school to create

an orderly environment for education. It would also ensure that the teachers taught rather than turning the children loose to run around the school yard all day. Another interesting thing to note at this point is that our school committee meetings with the teachers would try to encourage the teachers and remind them that the point of the school was to educate the children. The surprising thing was that the teachers would always argue that the purpose of the school was to provide jobs for teachers instead. This was evidence that the issues in the educational system ran deeper than teaching style alone!

Once the statistics had been entered, I sat down to look at them and decided to create some graphs, exam by exam. What I found was very interesting: Every class and every exam had an almost identical graph, year after year, class by class. It was an interesting example of a bell curve, in that there were a few students with high scores, while the majority of the class fell within a narrow band at a mid-level, with a few students dropping down low at the other end.

I eventually began to understand that this was also an accurate, reflective cross-section of society. Those few students with the higher grades in each class were those individuals who were born with the gift of cognitive thinking skills, or common sense, as we sometimes refer to it. They could take the information given to them and quickly figure out on their own how to use it. I later discovered that these people had a distinct advantage in the society over the general population.



SUGGESTIONS
for a Solution
"This Gives Us Hope"

Opportunities *for* Great Impact
By Those *in* Business *and* Positions
of Greater Influence

Whom to Target as Disciple Makers and Why

I served with our denominational Health Board as the Advisor to Technical Services during our 18 years of living and working in West Africa. This position, combined with being an American citizen, provided opportunities for me to meet many people in business, government, law enforcement, and the judicial system. I enjoyed meeting these people and engaging with them in meaningful conversation. I've had opportunities to talk at length with many of them about several different issues and challenges that society is faced with in their country and throughout Sub-Saharan Africa.

As a missionary, I would always be careful about expressing opinions about politics, but often our conversations would revolve around development and the inefficiency of a variety of things. This would often lead to the discussion of godly principles and contrasting them with some of the practices that were causing these issues. My nature is to try to understand the reasons for things, so when I see a particular problem, I look at it as the effect of a cause. What makes it this way? Who could possibly think that this is a good way to do something? Why do people put up with amazingly inefficient systems? These were questions I thought about often.

Here is an example from personal experience. After the first ten years in Africa, my truck registration was expiring and had to be renewed. We had people in the town where the main government ministries had

regional offices who handled these things for the mission, so I gave my registration card to someone who then went to the Ministry of Transport to apply for the renewal. He brought me back the original registration and the receipt for the fee paid for the renewal that acted as the temporary registration. It also had a 30-day expiration, and I was supposed to receive the new card within that time period. To preface the next part of the story, I never did get the new registration, and every month after that our person in the mission went to the Ministry of Transport to inquire about it.

Fourteen months later I was driving into town with some short-term expat friends who were working at the denominational technical school up the road from us. I was helping them retrieve some things for the school that had been shipped in a container that was sitting at the denominational center. I was stopped by a gendarme at a control point on the way there, and he asked for my vehicle paperwork, driver's license, and identity card, which I gave to him. After reviewing my documents, he told me that my registration was long expired and that I was in serious trouble. I pointed out the original receipt that he was holding in his hand was proof that I'd applied at the proper time for the renewal and that a person who worked in town for the denomination had already made 12 trips to the Ministry of Transport office to follow up. Each time he went there they told him that it wasn't ready yet, so not having the new registration wasn't for the lack of trying or concern.

My nature is to try to understand the reasons for things, so when I see a particular problem, I look at it as the effect of a cause.

He then embarked on a bit of a tirade, saying that he could impound my vehicle and have me arrested for driving an unregistered vehicle. My friends in the car were pretty nervous, thinking they would be stuck on the side of the road while I was carried off to jail. We had been living in Africa long enough, and I'd experienced similar conversations with law enforcement before. I knew that he was only waiting for a bribe and that I could remedy the situation quickly with a 10,000 Franc ($20) note, but as a Christian I knew that paying bribes wasn't godly behavior.

He eventually calmed down enough for me to tell him the story of the registration process and the lack of response from the ministry. I suggested that he squeeze into the vehicle with us, and we could drive up to the transport office together. He could explain the gravity of my situation to them and maybe it might help me get the new registration. However, when it became clear he wasn't getting any money from me, he told me to go but to take care of the situation.

After dropping my friends off at the Baptist Center to start preparing the cargo they wanted to take, I drove the short distance up the escarpment to the Transport Ministry myself. I spoke with a man who took my receipt and looked up my file. He said they couldn't find anything on record, and I would need to reapply, which also meant paying the fee again…. Two weeks later I went back to collect the new card, because that was the timeframe I was given for it to be processed. The first time I was there I'd had a conversation with a woman who was working in the same department where the registration was being processed. I had to do a lot of waiting, which gave us time to talk about my frustration with the inefficiency of the system. She agreed wholeheartedly that the system was indeed broken, but she didn't express the chance of any hope for it. I eventually asked her where the man was who took my application and money two weeks before. She said he'd been there a minute before but must have stepped out. I searched the entire ministry, but it seemed he'd conveniently disappeared. I went back to her office and asked who oversaw the Ministry of Transport there in our area, and she told me that it was the Regional Delegate whose office was at the end of the building.

I went out onto the long veranda and went down to the last door. I walked into a reception area and asked the receptionist if the delegate was in. I was told that he was, and I could go right into his office, which really surprised me. I was pleasantly surprised once again by a warm welcome by the delegate himself and his query as to my need. When I told him about the events that had transpired over the last 15 months, he just shook his head and said that nothing should ever take longer than a week in that office. He proceeded to tell me of the frustration

he himself experienced in trying to oversee an office full of people who had jobs there because they had relatives in places of influence.

Engaging Conversations

I'd already been thinking about talking to people like him who are in positions of influence about what I felt were the real issues behind Sub-Saharan Africa's lack of development. I shared my thoughts on the transformative effect godly behavior could have on society if people in positions like his could come together and support each other in living out honest behavior in their work by being people of integrity. He was extremely interested and told me that he thought it was a wonderful idea and that he would love to be a part of. He began to tell me about his family, his village, and many other things, and I began to give examples of some ideas I had about how I envisioned this proposal could be structured. He also contributed a lot of great ideas, and it was truly a fun and inspiring conversation. Most importantly, I didn't hear, "You don't understand, you're not from here." In the end, he went back with me to the office that had been giving me this seemingly eternal run-around with my renewal. It was interesting to see everyone snap to attention, and in one week I finally had my registration.

There are many other stories of the same nature including conversations with judges, lawyers, power company executives, engineers, law enforcement, business owners, and many others. What I began to realize was that the majority, if not all, of the people in positions of influence with whom I engaged in conversations about the lack of development in Sub-Saharan Africa and the inefficiency of its systems responded with engaging conversation. All these people were cognitive, and in many cases, creative thinkers. Many of them expressed surprise when I mentioned some of my theories and responded with comments like, "I never thought about that before, but that's correct!" or "Yes, that's exactly what the problem is!" Also, in every case when I told them of the idea of an "Integrity Group," they loved it, and not once did I get the "You don't understand" reply.

A few years before this was when we had the short-term couple enter all the grade data from my wife's primary school, and I'd played around

with the graphing and discovered the presence of the few in each class who stood out among the group. My wife enjoyed the kids she taught, and they enjoyed her; thus, there were many who would come and spend time at our house. We got to know them better on a personal level as a result. We could see marked differences between the kids as they played games and talked with each other during those times together, and it was clear that some were critical thinkers.

Connecting the Exam Graph to Life

We used to travel to the coast for our field meetings, often staying at a particular hotel in a large town there. Whenever we stayed at this hotel, either something was broken or something didn't work, and it was usually pretty dirty. We didn't have too many options of places to stay, and this area, even though it was an 8-hour drive, was the closest place for any kind of getaway.

A missionary couple who were colleagues of ours traveled with us to our field meeting down on the coast on one occasion because they had flown into our hospital airstrip from the remote location where they served. We had asked them if they would mind staying an extra night after the meetings so that we might look around to see if there were any better places to stay down there. Not trying to sound too fussy, but we happen to like clean places, and it's hot and very humid at the coast, so functioning air conditioning is more than welcome. The nights are long, and it's difficult to sleep when the air conditioning doesn't work.

On our exploration day, we drove up the coast a way to another popular hotel with a nice beach and thought we'd take a look at that one. We arrived around lunch time, so we figured we'd eat lunch there, too. The one room we looked at had a powerful musty smell of mildew; that was out for someone like my wife who struggles with allergies and asthma. While we were eating lunch, a couple walked into the restaurant and the woman had on a Boston Red Sox shirt. Being from Massachusetts, we just had to say hello and see where they were from in this country. We also thought that if they were staying at this hotel, we might be able to get a review from them. It turned out that she was from Boston, and he was working as the Consular Officer at the US Embassy in the capital.

They weren't staying at this hotel but at a place back down the coast, closer to the town. They told us that it was where the US Ambassador stays on vacation and was quite nice. We asked for a contact, and they gave us the phone number of the man who managed it. We called him to see if we could take a look at it and get some more information. We were very impressed by what we saw and decided to try it out the next time we wanted to get away.

We stayed there on our next trip down to the coast in the Limbe area several months later. It was wonderful: It was immaculate, everything worked, and it was built right on the rocks where the waves crashed. It was really a beautiful and relaxing place. There were magazines of building designs from the USA and other places, and the owner clearly had both a great design sense and an appreciation for cleanliness. We were surprised when the owner, who didn't live there but had it as a beach house, showed up while we were there, and we had a chance to meet him. We became friends right away because we shared a common interest in building and design. Once again, I enjoyed some great conversation because he was truly a cognitive thinker. We exchanged phone numbers, and I accepted an invitation to get together for a meal at some point when we were in the port city where he lived.

The first time we met for dinner was when I went down to the port city alone to meet some friends who were coming to visit us. We went out to a local restaurant and began to talk about all sorts of things. This was before I'd mentioned the integrity idea to anyone, and it was still just an idea that I believe God had placed in my mind. He was a committed Christian man who knew the Bible well and, most encouraging, he knew how it should be applied to life. He was, as we found out later, an extremely successful and highly connected businessman in this part of Africa. He was even a financial advisor to the country's president. During our discussions, which revolved around the challenges of business and the woes of Sub-Saharan Africa, I asked him what he thought about my idea. This was the idea that people like him, people in positions of influence in this society, could come together and form an organization that would promote integrity and support each other in living out those values in a difficult and corrupt environment. He said that he loved the

idea, and, in fact, he told me that God must be in this, as he'd had the same idea himself.

From this time on, we'd try to get together for a meal and catch up on every trip we made to the port city. A few years later, when I was there again, he invited me to his house to meet some of his former classmates. He was having an informal reunion with several people who had attended the same "special" school that had operated at one time in the country. He told me that this school had been formed as an experiment and that the people who started it had gone to several different schools throughout the country and handpicked the students who would receive the opportunity to attend this new school. I found out later from another friend, also an Integrity Group member who had attended the same school, that the school had been started by some Catholic educators. They'd been recruiting those few students that we'd identified in our graphs as the standouts in their classes. The group of people at his home that evening now had prominent jobs all over the world. One woman was a doctor at a hospital in Brooklyn, NY. Another was an engineer for a major oil company, but what I noted with interest was that they were all cognitive, creative, thinkers, and I enjoyed some great conversations that evening.

That was when I began to realize that most of the people who had become successful or had attained positions of influence in this country were people who were born cognitive thinkers. These people seem to have the ability to grasp ideas and concepts naturally and without formal training in critical thinking. I think that many people, especially those who have that gift, would, unfortunately, say that these people are more intelligent than others, but that may not necessarily be true.

Misconceptions of Intelligence and Formal Education.

Based on my reading on the subject of education and intelligence, I understand that there are about nine different types of intelligence that people can possess. Naturally, each intelligence type will be considered to be more valuable in the particular contexts in which it provides the most benefit. This beautiful quote is from Judith Lingenfelter's book, *Teaching*

Cross-Culturally: An Incarnational Model for Learning and Teaching, that can really help us understand this. "Howard Gardner (1983), another cognitive psychologist, set out to examine the idea of intelligence cross-culturally. Assuming that intelligence is broader than IQ, he examined hundreds of potential candidates for intelligence. Believing that the notion of intelligence as a single entity is too simplistic, he proposed the idea of "intelligences." The question then becomes "How are you smart?" rather than "How smart are you?"[13]

Most people have a blend of the different types of intelligence, and I'm sure that personality also plays a major part to varying degrees. However, I've discovered that critical thinking seems to be a key when presenting ideas that challenge deeply held cultural values.

Even people who don't have a natural ability towards cognitive thinking can and do learn to be critical thinkers to a certain extent in educational systems in which logic and problem solving are taught. My point is that it can be taught. However, education systems that focus on memorization, which are predominant in many countries, provide information with the intention that it be memorized and repeated back at exam time.

These systems virtually ignore creativity and critical thinking, leaving only those who are born with it to have it. Some children in a memorization-style system may do better grade-wise because of their natural ability to memorize well, but they may find themselves handicapped when it comes to real-world application of a subject. On one occasion, we saw a very young child from the nursery class in the hospital school stand and perform at a graduation program while holding a paper in his hands. He was reciting a very lengthy statement that he was in no way capable of reading; in fact, we knew he couldn't read at all.

I believe this rote memorization style of education has caused many difficulties over the years regarding people's abilities, educational certificates, and job performance, particularly for those individuals in lower levels of responsibility. This is a complex problem, one I'm not sure can easily be overcome. It would require major changes to the

13 Lingenfelter, Judith and Sherwood (2003). *Teaching Cross-Culturally: An Incarnational Model for Learning and Teaching* (p. 62).

firmly entrenched style of teaching in the public education system and to the general understanding and expectations of what it produces.

Many people are what I call "certificate or degree worshipers," because to them, the only place a person can gain information is in a classroom where a teacher can teach it to them. Of course, if this were the case, then nothing would ever change in life or industries, because knowledge would be limited to whatever is currently known. This would imply that no new products or techniques would ever come into existence unless by accident. People who are critical thinkers can take known things and apply basic principles in a variety of ways that are limited only by their imaginations, and they come up with new ideas or improvements on existing ideas. I'm not discounting formal education at all; in fact, it can be immensely important, but its efficacy can be seriously limited in value without the critical thinking component.

We had an electrician at the hospital when we first arrived there who fit this profile. Unfortunately for us, he left many years ago to return to school because his lack of institutional certification limited his opportunity for any salary increase, even though he was able to perform his job extremely well. I really missed him; he was an amazing thinker and fast learner and was truly gifted regarding all things electrical or electronic. He only had a primary school education at the time but had taught himself to be an electrician and to understand electronics just by playing with things and reading on his own. He worked with two different professional electricians whom I'd invited out to visit us, and both of them were impressed with his knowledge and ability to learn. The frustrating part was that he was refused a salary other than the lowest level because he had no formal education in the subject, even though he saved the hospital time and time again by keeping it functioning or repairing critical medical equipment.

The government created a law in the 1960s that stated that people must be paid according to the degree or certificate they held. The idea was intended to encourage people to pursue a formal education. Our health system took that policy and used it in reverse to limit salaries by saying that unless a person had a certain degree or certificate, they could only be paid a certain amount. It never considered a person's abilities,

whether natural gifting or self-taught. As a result, many people were underpaid despite their good performance because they didn't have a formal educational certificate. At the same time, many people were overpaid because, even with degrees and certificates, they were unable to perform the duties their credentials claimed they could. This was very foolish, because we ended up losing that electrician who eventually returned to school and finally received a degree in electrical engineering. Even when he graduated, the university accused him of cheating on his final project because it was so complex and above what is normally done!

We had another man like him who could also do anything and who's still there as I write this. He even performed all the work on our own personal vehicles in addition to troubleshooting and repairing hospital medical equipment and anything else electrical. He also receives the low salary because he doesn't have a certificate. He's married with several children, so he's pretty much stuck, a bad thing for him but a good thing for the hospital.

An example from the opposite perspective is a man who took a course and obtained a certificate in refrigeration and air-conditioning repair. He memorized and repeated back all the information he needed to know to pass the course, but he has no idea how a cooling system functions. He only knows what things are supposed to be connected to what other things, without any idea of how they actually work. He has cost the hospital and many individuals who trusted his certificate huge amounts of money because they entrusted him with the troubleshooting and repair of refrigeration equipment that wasn't working. One case was when one of our building technicians transferred from another hospital to the one where we lived and brought his furniture and his refrigerator with him. Upon plugging in the refrigerator, it would barely begin to cool and would then turn off, but it had been working fine when they left his previous home. Our refrigerator repair man was called and pronounced that the refrigerator's compressor was bad and needed to be replaced. Based on his diagnosis, the technician then borrowed about half a month's salary to buy a secondhand compressor to replace the one that was supposedly bad. In the meantime, a refrigerator repairman

from the regional capital was heading to a town up the road from the hospital to service a refrigerator. I'm not sure what the connection was, but someone who knew him asked him to stop by on his way and take a quick look at that refrigerator that was having the problem.

I was told that he opened the refrigerator door for a minute and told the owner of the refrigerator to let him know if it worked, and then he left. A few hours later it was nice and cold, and when the owner called to ask what the problem had been, he was told that the thermostat had been turned all the way down and there was nothing wrong with the compressor. Our administration continued to defend the original technician's ability even after numerous similar errors occurred and a lot of money wasted due to his incompetence, all because they trusted his certificate in refrigerator repair.

Doing something new and exciting in the context of Sub-Saharan Africa will require people who can catch the vision, understand the problem, and come up with creative ideas, but most importantly, not be constrained by tradition.

The Desire to Fight Poverty and What God Says About It

Fighting poverty has always been a major factor in many different ministries. This next section is intended to help readers to gain a greater understanding of a biblical perspective of the subject of poverty that will help keep the church focused on evangelism, discipleship, strengthening and empowering transformational local churches.

> **Proverbs 14:31:** *Whoever oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honors God.*
>
> **Proverbs 28:6:** *Better is a poor man who walks in his integrity than a rich man who is crooked in his ways.*

Anyone who wants to honor God must have a concern for those who live in need. What I'm calling needs are those basic necessities that human beings require. The world is full of struggles, political and religious persecution; natural disasters such as earthquakes, tsunamis, droughts or floods; wars and civil unrest; corruption in government and business;

disease and countless other challenges that can lead to crises and poverty at local or national levels. People who have any compassion at all for other people will certainly feel compelled to help in those situations. Those situations can also provide many ministry opportunities for the church to show the love of Christ in a practical way and, in so doing, follow in Jesus' own model of ministry that includes both the preaching of the Good News and concern for people's physical needs.

> **Luke 7:22-23:** *And he answered them, 'Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good news preached to them. And blessed is the one who isn't offended by me.'*

> **Deuteronomy 15:11:** *For there will never cease to be poor in the land. Therefore I command you, You shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor, in your land.*

From the earliest accounts of God giving instructions to His people, He instructs them to have a concern for the poor and the needy. He also even instructed those harvesting crops to leave some in the fields and vineyards for the poor to collect after the harvest.

> **Leviticus 23:22:** *And when you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap your field right up to its edge, nor shall you gather the gleanings after your harvest. You shall leave them for the poor and for the sojourner: I am the Lord your God.*

There should be no question in the mind of a Christian that we should be used by God to assist those in need, to be conduits of His love to people. We know that there's also both a "here and a yet to come" in the redemption story. There are opportunities now to grow in grace and into the likeness of Christ in our process of sanctification, sharing the good news of Jesus, and serving the Lord with the gifts He's given us. As believers, we have the hope of the new Heaven and new Earth in which every tear will be wiped away and all things will be made new. Many mission trips and mission ministries try their best to combine

both spiritual teaching with physical ministries, such as health care or construction projects, for this reason.

There can be two ways of ministering to people that Jesus always presented in combination with each other as he stated in Luke 7: 22-23.

> **Luke 7: 22-23:** *And he answered them, Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good news preached to them.*

> **Matthew 28:19:** *Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.*

Jesus talks about people being saved, making a profession of faith, and growing in knowledge of the things He taught. He also pointed out how the good works of a believer will show people the transformation that's occurred in their lives and they'll give glory to the Father because of those works. In other words, those believers have a wholistic Christian lifestyle worked out in a ministry of service to the Lord.

> **Matthew 5:14 -16:** *You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.*

Perceptions of the Need

Our mission organization's vision statement is, "We are asking God for a Gospel movement among every least-reached people group in our generation." This will center around starting and strengthening transformational national churches that will be equipped to take the Gospel to people in their own context and beyond; that is, equipping people to become the people God created them to be. This isn't a disconnected thought.

We had never been to Sub-Saharan Africa prior to our arrival at the end of May in 2001. We had only seen pictures and heard stories from missionaries who were serving or had served there in the past, and it all seemed very surreal at the time.

We were instantly overwhelmed by the heat and humidity at the airport in the port city when we arrived in our host country. The painted surfaces of the airport were covered in mold and mildew, and the airport was dirty and in serious disrepair then. We began to wonder what we'd gotten ourselves into! The first night we stayed at a rest house that was operated by a European mission agency, and it, too, was pretty rough in terms of amenities. It had an air conditioner installed in a hole through the wall that was clearly a replacement, because the hole in the wall was about four inches taller than the unit was and the hole was open to the outside.

Anyone who wants to honor God must have a concern for those who live in need.

We were wide awake at some point in the middle of the night because our bodies were telling us it wasn't time to be sleeping yet with the time change. At the same time, an amazing tropical thunderstorm was occurring outside that knocked the power out. The air conditioner shut off when the power went out, and immediately the sticky tropical air began to flow in through the gap above the air conditioner. With the steamy air, a horde of mosquitos came in that sampled our fresh western blood where our arms touched the mosquito net that hung over the bed. It was an interesting night and a bit scary.

The next day we took a ride with a Canadian missionary who had worked off and on over the years on construction projects with the denominational group we were going to be working with. He'd come to meet us, along with some nationals I'd be working with. They wanted to meet us and to show us some projects that the denomination's projects department was involved with then in the area. We had arrived at night in the dark and had not really seen much of the city as we drove to the rest house from the airport, so in the morning we were overwhelmed with sights and smells we'd never experienced before as we drove back out of the gate and into the city.

We saw huge piles of garbage and trash in many places as we drove through the city, with people, including some children, picking through it with sticks looking for something to eat. The smell of raw sewage and rotting trash was overwhelming at times as we slowly drove through streets that were falling apart and filled with potholes, some large enough to literally swallow a small car. Once we were out of the city and headed towards the coast, we passed homes with walls made of sticks arranged in a lattice-type structure and packed with mud to fill in the gaps. Some homes were made of wooden planks with corrugated metal roofs that were rusted and piled with stones to keep the roof sheets from blowing away. We felt a sense of concern as we saw the poverty.

The following day we headed to the hospital where we'd be living and working for the next three years. We saw many of the same things we'd seen the day before as we drove the seven hours north. The construction techniques also changed as we gradually climbed in elevation and the geography changed. Homes made of mud blocks became the norm, with roofs of the same corrugated metal sheets; homes with grass thatch roof construction were also common. We were Americans who'd never been to Africa or any other underdeveloped country, and three days into our time in here, we'd developed conclusions about the quality of life for people of this country. We felt badly as we saw the primitive housing (our perception at the time) that so many lived in, with outdoor kitchens where the meals were prepared over an open fire with a pot supported on three stones. We saw the need!

Adjusting Our Biases

Fast forward 18 years to the present. We realized over time that, for the most part, the citizens of this country were mostly content with their lives: They married, celebrated holidays, worshiped with joy, laughed with each other in the market, and pretty much enjoyed life as many people do in more developed countries. They could certainly use better quality medical care, better education, and in many cases, a clean water supply, but otherwise they have few complaints.

I mention this because those feelings of sympathy that we experienced in our first few days, weeks, and months there slowly began to fade; those things that we thought we'd seen as needs eventually became non-issues in our minds because we saw that they were non-issues in the national's minds. Our initial observations and feelings about what provides for a good life for people were based on our own cultural standards that had been instilled in us all the years we'd lived in the USA. We had been projecting those standards on the conditions we observed in this part of Africa. In other words, we were using our personal feelings and perceived ideas, our personal worldview, to determine what the needs of the people were in our host country.

So, just as we have a biblical mandate to care for the poor, the orphans, and the widows, we must take a step back and give serious consideration to what our priorities should be as we seek to serve God and promote the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We also must consider to whom God's Word is given and to what extent it applies to them. I believe that the Bible, its knowledge, and instruction, was written for all believers and that God's Word applies in every situation or role in which we might find ourselves.

We had many unexpected blessings and opportunities for ministry that we never anticipated during our first term as missionaries. One Sunday as we were visiting a small church that was being led by a hospital chaplain friend of ours, and as we were walking around the building, we could see a little village down in a deep valley behind the building. It was a strange experience because as I saw it, I felt a desire to go there. I asked some of the people in the church where we were worshipping that day what the name of the village was and if there was a church down there. That is when we learned about Robert, a lay person and how he'd been away from the village for work for several years but had recently returned. He felt led to reopen the church and was now leading it and preaching on Sundays. We became an encouragement to that church over the next several years and were involved in several different ways. I taught the single Sunday School class each Sunday to the entire church, which gave me a chance to practice learning the local language as a side benefit.

This small village was about as materially poor as any village we'd seen. It was in a valley with access via a road that was impassable for much of the year, even by a 4-wheel drive vehicle. It was an adventure and a half even when it was dry enough to be passable. The people who lived there raised most of their own food; they would trek the six miles out to the larger area market for the other items they needed. Alcohol and marijuana use was common, and all but a few people practiced ancestor worship. The only water available to the village people was from two different streams that cows would wade in during the dry season. It was certainly a village that could gain from many developmental upgrades.

That Doesn't Apply to Us, Another Misconception

One of the first skills I acquired while I was trying to learn to speak the local language was to be able to read it. The New Testament had recently been translated and published in this language, and we attended the dedication program that SIL and the translation team put on. Seeing how the people were deeply moved when they heard the Word being read in their heart language at the New Testament dedication, I knew it would be a valuable skill to learn. God truly gifted me, and I learned to read the language very quickly and fluently even though I didn't understand it. I immediately began using the New Testament as soon as I had a copy of it when teaching the Sunday School class. I didn't understand more than a few words of what I was reading, but my pronunciation was good, so the people understood it very well. I relied on my English version for my own understanding. The biggest thrill I had from this was that, almost on a weekly basis, people would tell me after class that they had heard these verses before in English but never really understood what they meant. It made sense to them now as they heard it in their heart language. This speaks volumes to the need for understanding the importance of phrasing, syntax, and the idiomatic nature of languages.

The first Bible study I did in the tribal language in the little village church was a study in the book of James. At this church people basically went through a program on Sundays and had a mid-week service on Wednesdays called Christian meeting. Given that ancestor worship, alcohol abuse, and marijuana use were found in the lives of church

members, it was clear that little heart transformation was occurring. This also meant that the church wasn't having much influence on the village. My idea was to do a study of the book of James and then challenge the church to come up with an idea for a project that they could do to show God's love to the village. At the end of the study, when I asked them to think of something that the church could do for the village, it was clear that this was something they had never even considered. In fact, one man said to me as we discussed it, "We're poor people, we can't give, we can only receive from others."

More discussion followed, along with reminding the church about what we'd just studied from God's word. I made some suggestions because the idea of giving was a whole new concept for these people. We finally decided to do a water project for the village, with people from the church taking the lead. The village as a whole would be required to actively participate in the project, but the project would be initiated by the church. Therefore, the church members must ensure that they would be present for work even if the others didn't show up. I want to add that this project was made possible with the financial assistance from other churches and individuals in the USA because the cost of the pipe, the concrete, and the technician I hired to do the stone masonry construction was well beyond the village people's ability. They were, however, responsible for and able to haul the materials to both construction sites, to the spring that was being capped and to the water storage tank that would supply the village. Both of these projects were situated about a half mile into the hills above the village. They would also be required to dig the three miles of trenches for the pipes required to distribute the water throughout the village. The villagers carried a very heavy load at the level of what they "could" do, as a result.

What guidelines are available when we feel compelled to help those whom we perceive to be in need? Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert's book, *When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty Without Hurting the Poor,*[14] provides general guidelines about not doing things for people that they

14 Corbett, Steve and Fikkert, Brian (2009). *When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty Without Hurting the Poor . . . and Yourself* (pp. 116, 119, 175).

can and should do for themselves. They also promote a development process they call ABCD, Asset Based Community Development,[15] which looks at what resources the recipients do have to work with rather than looking at what they don't have. The biggest problem with the latter approach is the same as the one that we experienced when we first arrived in West Africa, which is our tendency to project our own ideas of what another society truly needs.

Keeping Our Eyes on the Road Will Keep Us on It

The most important part of the effort be involved in a healthy, Gospel-centered, transformational, church-planting movement in any given context is going to be a focus on discipleship, helping people to grow into a likeness of Jesus in their own society where they can be salt and light where God has planted them. People should be encouraged and empowered to use the gifts that God has given them for His service and for building His Kingdom.

This is what we refer to as the Great Commission that Jesus assigned to believers:

> **Matthew 28:19-20:** *Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.*

God's word makes it clear that we're to have concern for those who have legitimate needs, and it tells us that we validate the love of God in our lives when we show compassion for those people.

> **1 John 3:16-18:** *By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.*

15 Ibid. (pp. 126-139)

Proverbs 21:13: *Whoever closes his ear to the cry of the poor will himself call out and not be answered.*

Many people sent us letters or came to our home and met with us personally with requests for assistance with medical bills or education during the years we lived in West Africa. We helped in many cases, especially after talking with them to gain a better understanding of their situation, and especially if we knew them and their families and trusted them. There's no denying that there are times when people have real needs, circumstances beyond their control, that have created a financial burden on them. The availability of health care at a much higher level, such as there is at the hospital where we were living, means many people can have surgeries and advanced procedures and diagnostics that were never available before. This draws patients from all over the country, people who come not only with a medical concern but also many times just trusting that they'll be able to come up later with the money for treatment. At the same time, our hospital has over 800 employees who must be paid each month. The hospital also had a huge monthly electrical expense and many other overhead costs that all require money to keep it going. The hospital administration tries its best to keep the costs as low as possible for the patients, but there are times when even those low medical costs can be overwhelming for some patients.

We have been more than happy in many of these cases to have the opportunity to be used by God to bring relief into their situation, not always providing cash to cover their expenses but often by providing opportunities for some to earn the money. This has also been true for a few cases involving education. We would come alongside someone who was bright, had worked hard in school and proven themselves to have great potential, and help with their education. At the same time, we kept in touch with them and followed along with their grades to ensure they continued to make good use of the opportunity. On one occasion a girl whom my wife had taught as one of her very first reading students in 2001 wanted to further her education. Her family couldn't afford to pay for it, but we decided to help her because she'd been a good student for many years. We never saw any progress reports from her during the

school year, and she was staying a distance away from her home. It was only when she returned home at the end of the school year with her final report card that we saw that she'd failed miserably. When we asked her what the problem had been and why she, whom we knew to be very bright, had failed, she laughed and said that she just spent too much time with her friends. This clearly turned out not to be a good investment, so we didn't support her the next year. Sometimes there's a lack of appreciation when help is extended, accompanied by an attitude that it doesn't matter. In this case and in others, while we were willing to help with the financial part, we'd stipulated from the start that we had expectations of their hard work and receiving acceptable passing grades. In other words, we expected each of them to behave responsibly with their assistance. These are a few examples of opportunities that can arise in which help can be extended to assist individuals with some very real needs.

Our tendency is to project our own ideas of what another society truly needs.

Most people we have seen who have come as volunteers to the hospital want to help others; in fact, it's the reason they came in the first place. Many of them, unfortunately, are taken advantage of because opportunistic people will flock to newcomers or those on a short-term visit and present them with their needs. Anxious to help, many of the visitors will give some help, but sometimes that help isn't given in response to real needs, which may take resources away from some other real needs that exist. If the administration or others who have been there for some time are asked "what do you think" questions by those who have been approached, they're directed to the chaplaincy, who can then vet the request. The hospital now has a policy against asking volunteers for money, but the requests still happen.

I don't want to dwell on this too much, but I do want to recognize that there are, in fact, times when helping financially can be appropriate, but is money the answer to the world's problems? Should it be the first thing to come to mind when we want to help? When we want to get involved in international ministry or want to serve in other ministries

to meet physical needs, even in the USA, do we put too much time and emphasis into meeting the physical needs, or perceived needs, so that the building up of the church itself suffers for it?

If We Teach the Whole Council of God, We Shouldn't Contradict It with Our Actions

Mary Lederleitner's book, *Cross-Cultural Partnerships: Navigating the Complexities of Money and Mission*,[16] is filled with wisdom regarding cross-cultural partnerships and the functional dynamics between different worldviews. She also spends a lot of time discussing the complexities that can arise in the area of finances because of the cultural values and cultural responsibilities involved with resources (see, particularly, Chapter 5, *"Paternalism Couched as Accountability"*). One of the ideas that I've taken from her book that relates to this subject, and I will use my own words here, is that most cross-cultural church partnerships between a church in a materially rich society and a church in a materially poor society usually means that the wealthy church gives and the other church receives. The "partner" church usually exists as a dependent of the wealthy church, which means it never really becomes a church that's thriving, growing, self-sustaining, and reproducing other churches in its own context. Something important is missing, because the members of the partner church are never reaching their full potential of service and the blessings that follow as God intended for them. At the same time, not only do they have an unhealthy attitude of dependency, but they also have some serious gaps in their functional theology, too.

The Apostle Paul wrote this in his first letter to the Thessalonians:

> **Thessalonians 4:10b-12:** *Yet we urge you, brothers and sisters, to do so more and more, [11] and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life: You should mind your own business and work with your hands, just as we told you,[12] so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you'll not be dependent on anybody.*

16 Lederleitner, Mary (2010). *Cross-Cultural Partnerships: Navigating the Complexities of Money and Mission* (pp. 77 -85).

How does a pastor or a Bible teacher approach a passage like this without demeaning the listener by saying that this doesn't apply to you? I'm not saying that assistance may be inappropriate at a given point in the relationship, but the long-term goal should be to develop a church into a thriving body of Christ in its community. A relationship that starts under that dependency model and continues over a long period of time leads to the dependency becoming a part of that church's DNA. It will be very difficult to change that. It stands to reason then, because the church is the people, that to have a strong, healthy, growing church requires that the members of that church be strong in their faith and strong in their commitment to serving and to living out godly principles in all areas of life. They need to develop into the people that God created them to be. A theologically and doctrinally sound program is required from the start for that to happen; it must be comprehensive in biblical teaching. Teaching that will feed the disciples and help them to become a strong and healthy church. For this reason, it's important that the words and the actions support and complement the biblical teaching for maximum effectiveness and to avoid any conflicts in understanding.

Care, Concern, and Assumptions

The Thanksgiving holiday is approaching here in the USA as I write this, and, of course, Christmas is on the horizon, too. Every year there's a mission that solicits people to fill boxes with items to be sent as gifts to those in need around the world. I'm treading really lightly here, because many people participate in this program every year, and it's highly promoted. I personally have mixed feelings about this ministry. I've heard wonderful testimonies of young people who were touched by the gifts and the Gospel message that's included. I've also heard of horror stories about villages that erupted into chaos as children who never had and probably never would have the toys and material things included in these boxes began to covet and fight over them.

In a case we're familiar with, some short-term medical people arranged for boxes to be sent for the children of the hospital's deaf school who lived in the dormitories located on the hospital compound during the school year. Some in the administration were opposed to the

distribution of those boxes because it was held as a formal program and was exclusive to the deaf children. It also promoted a Western idea of Christmas that wasn't very practical for the average national and was bound to cause jealousy issues. Gift giving in their context is usually getting a new outfit for the children, and the family would probably eat meat (a luxury for many people) with their meal on Christmas day. After the distribution we saw some pictures of the event on Facebook that were very interesting. The short-termers had their then four-year-old son handing a wrapped gift box to a deaf boy who was probably a teenager. To me it was a picture of how many Westerners view themselves: as the ones who must give things to materially poor people.

I recently read another comment on Facebook regarding the filling of these boxes and saw one that summed up what I think is a general attitude towards people who live in underdeveloped countries. The person wrote that they had filled their box and were so happy that their box would be sent somewhere in the world where it would be used to meet a need. We must carefully evaluate what messages we send as we attempt to help people and meet what we think must be a need. If we're going to be serious about sharing the Gospel message and being used by God to build His Kingdom through discipling and empowering disciple makers, we don't want to create, or be, a distraction from that message or the spiritual growth of believers by focusing so much on what we think they should have in order to be happy.

This discourse has been a bit lengthy because I'm trying to make a few different but related points. The first point is that yes, there's poverty in the world and God expects us to help if we can do so. The following verses directly imply that God's people are to take care of the poor in their own land.

> **Proverbs, 19:17:** *Whoever is generous to the poor, lends to the Lord and he will repay him for his deed.*

> **Deuteronomy 15:11:** *For there will never cease to be poor in the land. Therefore, I command you, You shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor, in your land.*

I think we can extrapolate that thought to the rest of the world based on New Testament verses that relate to taking care of the poor and those in need and our doing good works in order to glorify God. An example of that is **Matthew 5:16**, *In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven*.

The next point I'm hoping to make is about the needs themselves: We can't assume that someone is "in need" because they don't have what we have or what we think they should have. We in the West are conditioned to believe that there are certain things that we think are required to live, but some of those things may be considered luxuries in much of the rest of the world. If we examine the contents of many of the gift boxes that are sent out to help the materially poor at Christmas time, we can begin to get a sense, first, of what people assume people in materially poor countries don't have, and second, what they think will help improve their lives when they receive the gift boxes. The contents of those boxes are based on what they assume are the recipients' needs as many times the senders have no idea who the recipients will be..

We were able to gain a great understanding of how people provide for themselves and for each other after living in West Africa for all those years and developing relationships and becoming involved in the personal lives of so many people in many ways. I mentioned earlier that all societies have three common systems that may look different in each case but serve the same purpose. Quick reminder: these are a moral-cultural system, a system of governance, and an economic system.

There are many ways that people where we lived in Africa provide for themselves and their families and different ways they contribute to the larger economic system. Some people engage in providing transportation for people and goods, taxis and motorcycles being the most prevalent. Most people, regardless of social status, have farms where they can grow much of their staple foods, such as corn, beans, and a green called njama jama. Many people grow more than they can eat, so they'll sell some of their surplus to make money they can use to buy other necessary items, such as soap and other hygiene products, clothing, kerosene, and firewood, or

to pay for school fees and medical bills. Some people grow crops with the expressed purpose of selling them wholesale to others who will resell them in the cities and larger towns. Some people have small shops where they sell spices, phone credit, salt, and all kinds of odds and ends that people need but can't produce themselves. You'll be hard pressed to find anybody who's unable to meet their daily needs even though the income level is very low. Granted, life can be a struggle and a challenge at times, and in those times, we have seen the nationals come together to help each other out to meet those needs. The Bible teaches God's people to care for each other, and this is a wonderful way people can serve both their fellow man and God himself… and in so doing, receive the blessings and the storing up of treasure in Heaven that comes along with that obedience to His word. To me, there's a conflict if we teach people the whole counsel of God and then remove the opportunities that life provides to put it into practice.

Our Friend Faith

Toothpaste and toothbrushes are popular items that go into the Christmas gift boxes. Interestingly, both of those items are among some of the most common items that even the smallest little shops will carry. The market has many different vendors that sell food items, such as fruit and vegetables, rice, dried beans, and a host of other things including hygiene items, clothing, phone credit, small electronics, bottled water and sweet drinks, and powdered milk. Families with patients in the hospital, families who live in the area, and people from all over the division where the hospital is located, patronize the vendors in this market because the civil unrest has made other areas too dangerous.

Even the Fulbe people, traditional Muslims and a least-reached people group who live in the area, come to this market on a regular basis. Faith, a long-time friend of ours, and her husband are raising their niece and nephew, both of whom my wife taught in her school. Faith sells toothbrushes, toothpaste and other staples to support her family.

Faith also speaks Fulfulde, the language of the Fulbe or Fulani people, most of whom go to her to do business and visit. The marketplace is also a common meeting place for people who otherwise live far apart from each other. Bearing both the economic and social importance of these markets in mind, one might realize that sending free items in the Christmas gift boxes that are already commonly sold in these markets can create a small ripple in the economy by reducing the vendors' income. Here are some pictures of Faith in her shop that she generously sent to me so I could use them in this book.

Many people operate smaller shops in or near their homes, too. Sometimes these may be a simply built bench to display their produce or products on, and sometimes it may be a small shed made of boards. Many in the West might look at these shops and see poverty, yet these people are part of an economy that supplies and meets the needs of the people.

Help Them Be Salt and Light

Given what I've presented so far, when is giving money or material things appropriate? In some cases, as in the country where we were living, most people are having their needs met on typical days. There are specific people who have special needs at certain times, such as

for medical and education needs, but generally speaking, most people are having their needs met. Their children may not have smartphones and tablets or be on Facebook and Twitter, but I don't think we should consider those to be needs.

Events happen from time to time throughout the world, such as a tsunami, earthquake, or even war, that cause a dramatic, negative impact on a country or region. Many villages in our beloved African country have even now been burned and many people displaced within the country due to the civil unrest. This has created needs for things that people can no longer provide for themselves, and many organizations, including the national denomination we worked with, have stepped in to meet these needs. We pray that peace will eventually return to these parts of the nation and that people will once again be able to get back to life as it was and rehabilitate the economy and the damaged infrastructure. Corbett and Fikkert's book, *When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty Without Hurting the Poor…and Yourself,*[17] addresses the process of going from a crisis back to normalcy and point out that there should be different stages in the process.

I'll use my favorite example of Haiti as an object lesson here. The nation of Haiti, which shares the island of Hispaniola with the Dominican Republic, experienced a severe earthquake in 2010 that registered 7.0 on the Richter Scale, followed by several aftershocks. It created tremendous damage because it was centered in a highly populated region. Over 13 billion dollars in assistance have been sent to that nation since the earthquake, yet the island is still in deep poverty and unrest.

According to Corbett and Fikkert, a healthy society should progress through three stages. The crisis itself and its immediate aftermath, which would naturally be referred to as being "in crisis," is when the immediate emergency needs are met. This could involve evacuations, emergency medical care, establishing shelters, providing food and clean water, and any other activities or supplies that have been disrupted in the lives of the population by the crisis. The second stage, once the situation has been stabilized, would be the rehabilitation stage: the repair, rebuilding,

17 Corbett, Steve and Fikkert, Brian (2009). *When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty Without Hurting the Poor . . . and Yourself* (p. 103-115).

or reestablishment to recover what was damaged or lost. The third stage, called development, is when growth and improvement beyond the original starting point would continue from where it left off prior to the crisis.

Haiti has technically been in a continuous state of crisis now for the past 12 years. More recently, in 2012 and 2016, hurricanes impacted the country again with devastating blows, and they can't seem to climb out of the crisis hole even after all that assistance. So, what is the long-term, sustainable answer to Haiti's problems that we should think about to help that nation move beyond its crisis state? One very important thing to remember is that God's Word, as provided to us, is written to all people regardless of material wealth. It tells us to strengthen churches and contribute to the sanctification of all believers, so we should be careful to not get in the way of that happening but be contributors toward that goal.

> **Ephesians 2:10:** *For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.*

This applies to all God's people whom God will use for His glory and for growing His church in all contexts. It's an opportunity to give and be salt and light, so we should be careful to allow them to be the people He created them to be in every situation.

Spiritual Capital and the Economy

What follows is inspired by the chapter, "*Spiritual Capital,"* in Ken Eldred's book, *God Is at Work: Transforming People and Nations Through Business*.[18] Ken's work focuses on transforming people and nations through business, which is one aspect we also hope to employ with local businesspeople, but our focus is intended for a much broader array of applications across many aspects of life. Another book that focuses entirely on the subject of spiritual capital that has greatly increased my understanding on the topic is Samuel D. Rima's *Spiritual Capital: A Moral*

18 Eldred, Ken (2009). *God Is at Work: Transforming People and Nations Through Business* (Ch 5, pp. 96-115).

Code for Social and Economic Justice. My goal is for the idea of spiritual capital to be used to empower national leaders and people who are in positions of influence in the church to help them find creative ways to engage both in discipleship and outreach.

In economics, capital consists of assets that can enhance someone's power to perform economically useful work. For example, in business there's start-up capital, an initial amount of money used to buy a product for resale, to buy equipment to facilitate manufacturing, to buy seeds or small plants to grow produce, and many other things to be used to generate a profit for the business' income. There's also operating capital, which is typically part of the money that's derived from the sale of a product or service that's set aside for the business' operating expenses by rebuying more product to sell or tools and equipment used in the operation of the business. Sometimes some of the profit is reinvested to grow the business larger by increasing the number of products to be sold or by buying or renting more land to farm. Capital, as we can see, is very important to the starting and operation of a business. Capital is, therefore, an essential asset or resource without which a business can't survive.

Why would I talk about financial capital in a document that's focusing on church strengthening and discipleship? I want to take some time to introduce you to another type of capital that offers similar benefits to life, just as financial capital does to business. My experience has been that very few people have ever heard of it, and if you can understand it well enough to understand its basics, it can provide many opportunities to discuss current events and social conditions and to introduce people to Christian values.

Caring attitudes, commitment to service, loyalty, love, quality, and trust are all biblical principles that produce value in relationships and society as a whole. Work that is done in a way that displays these attributes adds something to our work that increases its value. People will often pay more for a product or a service if the company's reputation is good and its brand name or the people involved have a reputation for being trustworthy. Principles that originate from a heartfelt conviction produce what is called *spiritual capital*. People in positions of leadership,

whether in government or institutional administration, in business or other organizations, who live out these principles in their positions of influence, not because they must but because they have a genuine love and concern for people and what is right, generate spiritual capital.

People of integrity who hold themselves accountable, who are honest and offer hope by being loyal and trustworthy, who are encouragers and good stewards, who love and serve others and create order in their business and societies, are people who do things "as unto the Lord." There's no law that forces people to behave this way. However, they're acting in a manner that glorifies God, using their gifts and talents to do their best regardless of others' expectations.

Many societies can't get off the ground regarding development because their spiritual capital accounts are bankrupt. Ken Eldred points out that spiritual capital is the faith, trust, and commitment that we and others will do what is right, which means that the spiritual capital account can either increase or decrease based on someone's personal experience with us. My goal in this book is to help strengthen churches and to grow God's Kingdom through His people. Spiritual capital is a product of human behavior at different levels in society. It's clear that the higher in society a person is, as a person of influence, the greater the impact he or she will have, whether for the good or the bad. Many people in positions of influence in our African nation would claim to be Christians, yet in a society that has very little spiritual capital, one could argue that the effectiveness of the church in that society is minimal or non-existent. I would also present this as evidence of the lack of transformation that the Bible has had on the cultural values that contrast with Biblical values. I use our host nation as an example because we lived and ministered there for 18 years, and I'm focusing on the church in Africa, but this topic is equally applicable everywhere in the world… even in the USA!

A given society's spiritual capital "account" reflects the amount of spiritual capital it has, that is, the faith, trust, and commitment its people have that others will do what is right. This can be compared to a bank or credit union account where one can make deposits that add funds to

increase the account, or one can make withdrawals that remove funds from the account. The currency, then, is the exercise or absence of those biblical principles listed previously in the section on values. For example, if someone favors another person in a decision because they see that person as more important than another, he's making a withdrawal from the spiritual capital account. However, someone whose decision is based on fairness and equality will make a deposit, and the spiritual capital account will increase.

A key factor, if not the most important factor, isn't the biblical values themselves but that they're exercised consistently, because that's the foundation of trust. People won't have faith in the behavior of people whose behavior isn't steadfast and reliable. That eliminates trust because their behavior lacks commitment or consistency. This type of inconsistent behavior doesn't reflect God's character, either, which also will detract from their ability to be a witness on His behalf and doesn't contribute to a "strong" church. It most certainly undermines any credible witness in one's life.

God spoke to Solomon, as recorded in II Chronicles, because He was pleased with King Solomon. However, God spoke to Solomon in a dream and warned him about what would happen if the nation of Israel strayed from following God's laws. At the same time, God also offered hope, saying that when that happens:

> **II Chronicles 7:14:** *If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.*

This was God's promise to His people of Israel, but there are other verses that state God's blessings on the general population.

> **Matthew 5:44-45:** *But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.*

Some of God's blessings fall on all of humanity as Matthew points out in this verse. By virtue of people developing spiritual capital in their positions of influence, even those who aren't followers of Jesus will enjoy the faith, trust, commitment, and benefits to society as they contribute to their societies' spiritual capital account.

Now let's look at the condition of many other Sub-Saharan African countries that have been trying for decades to develop into countries where their people can be gainfully employed. This would be a country where their natural resources are used by their own industries to manufacture their own products for their own consumption and for export. This would also be a country where most of the population has access to clean water, reliable and stable electricity, a quality education for their children, access to modern health care, and all the other things that could be available to make healthier, happier, and more productive lives.

Sub-Saharan Africa has received the equivalent of tens of trillions of dollars in financial aid for the past several decades as I mentioned earlier, yet it still remains, for the most part, seriously lacking in these fundamental features of infrastructure and services. Additionally, a lot of money given to missions is designated for projects and programs that are designed to provide many of these things but that haven't met those needs.

When Spiritual Capital is Missing

A chain of events occurred in 1991 that began the dissolution of the former Soviet Union. During the Soviet Union's 69-year existence, 15 Soviet Republics were ruled by a single party Marxist-Leninist government that declared itself as socialist and moved into a communist form of government based on common ownership of resources and industry. There was no free market or economic incentive, and religion was suppressed because Karl Marx had said that "Religion is the opiate of the people." Communism has always been at odds with religion, so it isn't surprising that you'll generally not find a moral-cultural foundation in Communist countries that's based on Christian values that contribute to spiritual capital.

The countries that were members of the Soviet Union were still under a dark cloud even after they were free politically of communism's oppression. Many companies from western capitalist societies saw a huge market opportunity and rushed in to take advantage of it as soon as these countries were open for business, so to speak. However, because there was no solid foundation of morality, one of the first things to develop was an underworld focused on taking as much as they could from these businesses. The unfortunate thing for those companies that were corruption victims was that they then found themselves with another problem: the law enforcement and justice systems were equally corrupt and offered no protection from the losses they suffered from the underworld. Most of those companies retreated from investing there, as a result, and abandoned the idea of a wonderful opportunity because the social-political climate wasn't conducive to a thriving business. These former member countries of the Soviet Union were essentially bankrupt when it came to spiritual capital.

One of my close friends in the country where we lived who's very involved in business at a very high level would love to see the nation develop through investment by companies that would come and help the nation utilize its vast natural resources to build a strong economy. He had developed some wonderful brochures and was actively involved in trying to find those businesses. I told him what I knew about the former Soviet Union's story and that most businesses had learned a vital lesson from that experience. They would never go to a nation that did not have a fair and honest justice system committed to defending them against corruption.

Askold Krushelnycky, a journalist born in London to Ukrainian refugee parents, wrote a summary explanation about the Soviet Union story, quoted by Ken Eldred in his book.[19] "Most have been dismayed by the adverse business environment fostered by corruption. … Many western firms have withdrawn or reduced their activities because they

19 Eldred, Ken (2009). *God Is at Work: Transforming People and Nations Through Business* (p. 102).

are fed up with becoming the targets of corrupt officials demanding bribes, of being cheated by corrupt businessmen, and of being at the mercy of a corrupt system… In sum, corruption corrodes a society. When nepotism replaces merit, when cunning and cheating replace trust and honesty, when force and murder triumph over the law and a sense of decency—then the threads binding together a civil society are weakened and eventually destroyed."

Many underdeveloped societies have no consistent integrity in business and government. This has blocked the development of spiritual capital. Spiritual capital can be deposited, and it can be withdrawn. The point is that a nation that wants to develop but thinks it can do so without first putting in place a system that will help accrue spiritual capital is sure to be disappointed.

Cultural Understanding of Government

There are other challenges that add to the complexity of the development of nations and societies that must also be understood if we want to be part of the solution. The type of government and economic system a society has can impact development. A society that is less constrained ideologically and promotes freedom of thought and ideas and possibly even offers financial rewards is likely to develop faster. A society that's more tradition based will likely be more resistant to change and less likely to see new developments happening within their context.

The vocabulary of a society's language will be shaped by their cultural values, traditions, and the environment and may pose some challenges to new ideas. For example, we can look at African traditional government to see how the governmental structure and function can impact vocabulary. Many nations in the West have a democratic process in which new political leaders are elected to office on a regular basis. Some offices have term limits, or the number of years a person may serve in that position before they're no longer allowed to remain in that office. Sub-Saharan countries that obtained their independence from the former colonial powers developed their own constitutions and formed their own governments. Many of these countries adopted term limits for their presidents due to pressure from the West and from democracy

advocates in Africa. In many cases, as in our host country, the incumbent president overturned the policy of term limits and remains in power for years.

The incumbent president in Gambia lost in the 2016 election but rejected the results; he vacated the office only after military intervention. To better understand this, a traditional African government at the tribal level has of a chief and his palace council. Then, the chief will appoint a village council, elders, and an individual to represent him at each village under his authority. A tribal chief, in most cases, isn't only a political leader but is also involved in traditional religion and can act as a judge in a hearing and decide disputes among the people in his chiefdom. A person in this position doesn't come into power by election but typically through a process that's spiritual in nature and discerned by a "King maker" or other authority, after which he's accepted by the people. Outside of extreme circumstances, he is in his position as chief for life.

People won't have faith in the behavior of people whose behavior isn't steadfast and reliable.

The country where we served, a nation that has some 250 different tribes encompassed in its political boundaries, has had a rocky history since its independence and is currently embroiled in a civil war. One particularly important thing to understand in the grand scheme of things is that it was the colonists who drew the political boundaries that joined all these tribes into the same political "country." Now one person from one of the many tribes is in power over all of them. Given the system of power-for-life that's existed for centuries, it's no wonder at all that term limits are hard for many to accept, given their cultural understanding of power. Many people see a possible advantage to term limits and changing top leadership on a regular basis, but for most, their argument for this is that their tribe doesn't "get a turn."

The tendency towards tribal allegiance is easily understood, given their history and the idea of the tribe members looking out for each other. Thus, when people do get into positions of power, they're expected to do what they can to bring those benefits home to their family and tribes. Western countries assume that a democracy in which leaders are elected

to office by the populace and institute term limits for the president is the best form of government for all. They're basing that on their own experience and cultural values, but it may not work so well in other settings because of the very different history and value systems.

My previous outline of some governmental structural differences and perspectives on power are influenced by the different worldviews regarding important aspects of their lives. Consequently, it stands to reason that the way people react to various issues and the way they may solve challenges can look quite different among diverse cultures. This is where the ideas of culture and tradition can even impact vocabulary. Every society has a vocabulary, and the words that develop within it not only communicate values and viewpoints, but may also be limited by those viewpoints and values held by the people in those societies. One example could be that there may not be words to express certain things or ideas because they don't exist in that society's cultural practices. For example, many languages have no single words to express the idea of "commitment," "accountability," and "compromise." Ken Eldred points out that these are spiritual capital words that must be explained in sentences or in several words in many different cultures. There's a social structure and rules of order from the chief right on down to the youngest child in an authoritarian society, such as a tribal society. Responsibilities and expectations are understood and not overly debated in these cultures, so "compromise" isn't a widely practiced idea. Is it any wonder that civil conflicts can go on for years when the very idea of the abdication of power or compromise is out of the question?

At the same time, imagine what a huge impact on life there could be by transformed hearts and minds whose goals are to:

1. Do unto others as you would have them do to you **(Matthew 7:12)**. *So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.*

2. Love your neighbor as yourself **(Matthew 22: 37–39)**. *And he said to him, you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the*

great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

3. Esteem others above oneself **(Philippians 2:3).** *Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.*

Spiritual capital, one of the key ingredients for a politically and economically successful society, can never develop when leadership and people in positions of influence are self-serving and when trust is extremely limited or non-existent. It's something that would automatically develop when people in positions of authority and influence lived out biblical, godly lives.

Whole Life Discipleship

Ministry in missions has primarily revolved around two main points for years. The first is spiritual ministries, which might include Bible teaching, training pastors and other church leaders, conducting different events such as Vacation Bible School or camps for children, etc. The second is the meeting of physical needs, such as clean water projects, building projects of different types, assistance with food and education, and supporting orphanages. We often refer to a trip or ministry that touches on both points as a holistic ministry, which is when both points tend to focus on giving people something or doing something for people.

God has unquestionably used and richly blessed both types of ministries in many places, but my observation is that they have left a large gap in the church. They have left something out of the equation that's constrained the church from becoming the church that can have a huge local impact, a church that can think beyond itself to reach the unreached.

A friend gave me a book several months ago written by Neil Hudson titled *Imagine Church: Releasing Dynamic Everyday Disciples.* I highly recommend it to anyone interested in growing God's Kingdom and reaching the unreached. The book is exciting to me because it zeros in on what is necessary to implement the very things I've been talking about in this book. This section is based on several thoughts from that book.

I've spoken at length about culture, about what culture is, and the influence and impact cultures have on our societies and in our individual lives. I've also talked about how cultural values can be both good or bad and how they can also directly impact the condition of our physical world. The transformation of those values that are contrary to God's instructions into conformity with His word can also bring about positive changes in our moral-cultural, economic, and political systems.

Every society has a vocabulary; words that develop within it not only communicate values and viewpoints, but may also be limited by those viewpoints and values held by the people in those societies.

I also previously mentioned sub-cultures, and one of the first things that struck me in Neil Hudson's book is that he refers to a "church culture."[20] Every church, no matter where it is, has what we often refer to as core values, those things that the church holds to be important. These values will determine what programs the church develops, what topics its Bible studies focus on, what missions they support, and any other activities that might occur within the context of that church. Several years ago there was a movement that encouraged churches to reflect on their core values in relation to their activities in an effort to help them become more effective. The thinking was that developing a vison statement would enable them to better set goals and develop and plan programs, studies, and other activities that would help them realize those goals and achieve their vision.

A large part of many church activities has been towards the meeting of felt needs, both in their home locations and in other countries where physical needs seem to run high. One of this book's goals (the one you are reading) has been to help people understand that, outside of an immediate crisis, the answer to these issues in the long term isn't money but cultural value transformation. How can we begin to move practically in that direction so people can become who God created them to be?

The following quote from Neil Hudson's book caught my attention

20 Neil Hudson (2012). *Imagine Church: Releasing Dynamic Everyday Disciples* (p. 30).

and relates directly to what I think is the missing piece in missions and gets us moving in the right direction.

> "This book is about how an ordinary church, your church perhaps, can become a community of people who help one another live out their whole life—at home, at work, in church, in the neighborhood—as followers of Jesus, engaged in his mission to the world. 'What other kind of church would you really want to be involved in creating?' you might well ask. Still, whole-life-disciple-making churches are in fact rather rare. You can search out fine preaching churches, and fine churches involved in social action, and churches that really know how to pray, and churches where the worship in song and in music is really sublime, but it is rare, very rare, to find a church where the main thing is exactly what Jesus identified as the main thing. 'Go and make disciples' was Jesus' final instruction to the disciples he'd made. He did not say, 'Go and make converts.' He did not say, 'Go and make people who know quite a lot.' He said in **Matthew 28:19, 20:** *'Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you'.*
>
> And Jesus taught his disciples quite a lot about pretty much every area of life. He taught them that their mission was everywhere—not just in synagogues and in the temple courts—but everywhere."[21]

I initiated a training program in our organization for the technical and construction trades. I was motivated to do that because we employed many different trades people—masons, carpenters, and people from other construction related trades—for different building projects within our health-care system. The one thing that I saw with all the older workers was that they had apprentices, young people who had paid

21 Hudson, Neil (2012). *Imagine Church: Releasing Whole Life Disciples* (p. 15-16).

money to these men to be their masters and teach them their profession.

There are many different native dialects in the part of the country where we lived, but a common language spoken by everyone, especially the younger people, is pidgin English, and the name in pidgin for apprentice is "learn boy." The apprentice's goal is to learn how to become a tradesperson in the likeness of his master so that when his training is complete, he would, hopefully, have the knowledge and skills to practice his craft just like his master did. I observed that many of the professionals that we hired weren't very skilled at their trades, and so it stood to reason that the apprentices they were training wouldn't be receiving a very good education and would end up as not very skilled, either.

A translation of the New Testament portion of the Bible was also done in pidgin, and the name they used for disciple was the same term used for apprentice, "learn boy." I think this term is more straightforward than disciple in that it communicates the idea that disciples are apprentices of sorts who are studying from the master so they can serve and minister to others as Jesus did.

Another point Hudson made is that there are two fundamental truths found in most churches doctrinally but not fully grasped in application. The first is "Jesus is Lord of all." He writes,

> "Here's the problem: 'Jesus is Lord' has become a phrase with which we may have become so familiar that it has lost the radical, comprehensive demand that it implies. It is not just a ceremonial title that we give Jesus when we are in a church context. It is a fundamental truth that has direct consequences for the way we live every aspect of our daily lives (Romans 12:1-3; Philippians 2: 1-11; Colossians 3:1-4:6; 1 Peter 1:3-25). If we have bowed our knees to him then we have been enrolled in his cause. We have not become Christians to escape the complexities of this world, nor has Jesus promised to turbo-boost us through the difficult moments of life (Mark 8: 34-36; John 16:33). We have been included in the kingdom of God as citizens of this new kingdom, so that we can live as ambassadors and agents of

> this new kingdom in the very ordinary offices, classrooms, and call centers that we call ordinary life (Ephesians 5:21-6:9; Colossians 3:18-4:1; 1 Peter 2:13-3:7)."[22]

A.W. Tozer talks about the importance of who we understand God to be in his book, *The Knowledge of the Holy*. The following paragraph taken from the opening chapter of this book directly connects to Neil Hudson's comments.

> "What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us. The history of [humanity] will probably show that no people has ever risen above its religion, and man's spiritual history will positively demonstrate that no religion has ever been greater than its idea of God. Worship is pure or base as the worshiper entertains high or low thoughts of God. For this reason the gravest question before the Church is always God Himself, and the most portentous fact about any man is not what he at a given time may say or do, but what he in his deep heart conceives God to be like."[23]

Our understanding of who God is to us personally and what role He plays in our lives will be directly seen in our daily behavior. It will also be evident in how much we allow His Word to transform our cultural values so that they more closely resemble His values. The connection between a strong church, the spiritual health of the people, and its influence in society at the level of the moral-cultural, economics and political and the development of that society now becomes clearer, as we saw in the seciton on culture and its connection to development.

If God is truly the Lord of all in our lives, then we can arrive at two conclusions from Hudson's statement,

> "Whole-life-discipleship intends to mean what it says: there is no area of a Christian's life that Jesus does not have

22 Ibid. (p. 36-37)
23 Tozer, A. W. (1978). *The Knowledge of the Holy* (pp. 11-12).

ownership of, and there is no part of their life that he does not want to use for his glory."[24]

The second fundamental truth Hudson talks about is that "Making whole-life missionary disciples is the core vocation of the church."[25] No Bible-believing church would dispute that discipleship is important, but the way discipleship is viewed may be different for different churches. I pointed out in the section on education that much of the education in our African country is focused on memorizing information to be repeated back on exams to pass the class. A pastor friend of mine told me once that many of the seminary students approached their seminary education in this same manner; their goal was to memorize what they were taught with little, or no attention given to how to apply it to the daily lives of their future congregations. Discipleship, in this case, was about knowing information about theology and doctrines, not about becoming Christlike in the home and at work.

The challenges involved in refocusing the church into a completely different way of thinking about who a disciple is will be great in many places where traditions have been in place for a long time. It's absolutely essential, however, if the church is going to be able to fulfill its role in the Great Commission. Many people have traveled to foreign lands and taught the Bible at many different levels and focused on many different topics and taught excellently prepared and delivered lessons. Nevertheless, nothing has really been gained if the hearers' minds are focused on memorizing the material rather than thinking about how to assimilate it into their daily lives and teach it to others. This is a practical application point for targeting those critical thinkers who, in turn, can teach it in their own cultural contexts without being hindered by that cultural wall that we expatriates will always face.

This is particularly important when we desire to see Gospel movements start and expand into areas where it has never been heard. The best equipped and most naturally prepared people to do that are people from the same or similar cultural backgrounds who can relate

24 Hudson, Neil (2012). *Imagine Church: Releasing Whole Life Disciples* (p. 22).
25 Ibid. (p. 38)

better and more easily with those they desire to reach. They understand not only the languages, cultural idioms, and metaphors, but they also understand the cultural, religious, and historical backgrounds that have shaped the people into who they are today. This is important because discipleship, the transformation of the heart and minds of people in their deepest cultural values, is a very personal thing. These people will know exactly where the culture must be adjusted to form that church subculture whose values will resemble Jesus at the deepest levels and then focused on making disciples that will be salt and light in their daily lives where they live, work, and play.

A Perfect Cross-Cultural Partnership

I was getting ready to head into town to do some errands and shopping one day after we'd been in West Africa for several years. An idea popped into my head that we should buy a sack of rice for one of our good friends who was a hospital chaplain. This was strange, because it was, for lack of a better way to describe it, a vivid idea. I told my wife about it and she said, "That's funny because I had the same idea!." This particular chaplain and his wife had become close friends with us over the years, and my wife had taught their children to read when we first arrived at our home in at the hospital. We had also shared different ministry experiences, because he was involved in a small church in a nearby village that didn't have a pastor and couldn't afford one. He had also gone with us a few times to some other small villages where we'd been involved in helping to start some churches. One of the things that we enjoyed most about our friendship with them is that we never talked about money. It was hard to have "friends" in Africa because there was always some need that would come up in any conversation, and when someone dropped by for a visit, there was usually an ulterior motive.

On this day, this thought was somewhat unexpected, but because we both had it, we thought it was something we should do, so I bought a sack of rice when I went to town. Upon returning home to the hospital, I drove down to the housing quarter where they had a small apartment, and I found that nobody was home at the time. I just left the 50-pound

sack of rice next to the door. Just to qualify that this wasn't some kind of extravagant gift, a 50-pound sack of rice at the time was about 18 dollars. Unknown to us that morning as I was heading to town, the Lord was clearly behind those ideas.

A few hours later there was a knock on the door. There on our veranda were the chaplain and his wife; he was smiling, and she was in tears. He began to tell us about one of the ways he and his wife served some of the patients in the hospital ward where he served as chaplain. The hospital prepares and serves food only to leprosy patients in the hospital; thus, other patients are expected to bring a person along with them as a "care giver" who will prepare their meals, do their laundry, and provide for their basic nonmedical needs. Sometimes there are people who either have come from a distance away and have no family nearby or they don't have someone with them to provide for these needs, or they have no money to buy food. Our friend, as he became aware of these people, would tell his wife and she would prepare meals that they would then bring to the patients.

On this particular morning, she'd prepared breakfast for her family of five children and her husband and some meals for the patients they were currently serving. That particular meal preparation consumed all the food they had remaining in their house. They told us that as they were preparing the meal and knowing it was going to finish all the food they had, they had looked at each other and said, "God will provide." When they returned home that afternoon, they found the sack of rice at their door. We were humbled by their faithfulness and thrilled by how God spoke to us to join them in their service to Him. We then formed a ministry partnership.

What made this partnership special, if not perfect, was that they're nationals. The chaplain and his wife aren't materially wealthy, they lived in a very small apartment with five children, and they lived on a chaplain's salary, which wasn't much. However, they're people who can relate comfortably and deeply with the people they serve. We could never connect with these patients with the same level of effectiveness as they could, but we could assist with the funds needed to carry on this wonderful door-opening ministry for the Gospel that they felt called to. This

formed a wonderful partnership between us that lasted for several years until he was transferred to another health center. However, we remained in partnership with them for many years in other ministries, including even now, through the Integrity idea, as he serves as a pastor in a local church plant. This ministry also had other beneficial impacts. The chaplain and his wife are financially equal with most other nationals, and they have demonstrated true godly service that can be emulated by others in their context. They had been doing this on their own for a long time prior to our involvement, demonstrating that one doesn't have to be materially wealthy in order to serve others. The patient beneficiaries of their generosity knew that they were seeing genuine, caring hearts exhibiting the love of Christ. And for us? We were blown away by the whole thing and seriously challenged and humbled by their incredible faithfulness. To this day, they continue to be "hall-of-famers" in our minds.

How can we inspire others to be whole-life disciples and disciple makers? We need to recall some of the basic principles discussed throughout this book to become practical in doing that.

The most important thing to remember is that all the problems we face in this life and in this world have a single root cause: the separation that exists between man and God caused by our choosing to do things contrary to His ways, otherwise known as sin. However, sin manifests itself in many ways that corrupt every area of our lives. We also need to remember that the Bible was written for all humanity. It should also be regarded as something that applies to every believer regardless of where they live or their social and economic status. God never intended for some people to be the givers and for others to be the receivers as a way of life. However, the Bible does tell us that we're to help those in need, and God even gave instruction for His people in Deuteronomy.

> **Deuteronomy 15:11:** *For there will never cease to be poor in the land. Therefore I command you, 'You shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor, in your land.'*

There are those who, at times, are in desperate need as a result of a crisis situation, and those who are able should be happy to help them out. There are many, though, who live in constant need because of greater,

systemic problems in their societies. It may be good for us to come to their aid in some of these situations. However,, under no circumstances should we view those situations as acceptable lifestyles and ignore the underlying problem which, as I've also written about, is the systemic corruption that exists politically and economically, the fruit of ungodly moral-cultural systems. The only sustainable remedy in these cases to the infrastructure under development and to a society's economic and social struggles is to transform the system, and the only way to transform the system is to transform the people's hearts and minds.

Spiritual Capital is the topic that I receive the most excited response to from people in Sub-Saharan Africa. The responses are always accompanied by enthusiasm when I've presented this to people or sent them papers I've written on the subject. Common responses have been, "This idea of spiritual capital needs to be looked into," and "You need to provide us lessons that we can use to teach this." I received this from a pastor friend: "Pa, I have started using the paper you gave me, Spiritual Capital. It was very interesting, I'm excited!". I believe that I get these reactions because, for most people, the concept provides a tangible resource for hope, something that could actually make a difference in the lives of people and of a nation.

Spiritual Capital, though, isn't some idea that can be invoked by a command or a decree. It requires a conscious, active, and consistent participation in the type of behavior that produces the spiritual capital currency that builds the spiritual capital account. It's particularly true in those societies that lack it the most. Consistency is the main characteristic that makes spiritual capital real in people's minds, the same thing that makes trust real or believable. A person who is honest, compassionate, or faithful once in a while but not at all times will never have any real impact in other people's lives or their society because those occasional displays of virtue will be seen as just that, occasional. David Horsager's book, *The Trust Edge*, describes throughout the book what he calls the 8 Pillars of Trust, the attributes that contribute to the trustworthiness of today's top leaders. The pillars are Clarity, Compassion, Character, Competency, Commitment, Connection, Contribution and Consistency. Consistency is the most important because the others,

even though they are also important attributes, will not produce trust if they're not demonstrated consistently. I want to really emphasize this point, because any attempt to become a contributor to a societies' spiritual capital account will require consistency if it's to be successful and taken seriously.

I previously discussed several cultural values and pointed out ways they can either contribute to or detract from a society's health and development. I pointed out how, when godly attributes are allowed to adjust those values, they have a real-time, positive effect. However, if those values are flexible and occasionally compromised because someone feels their best interest can be better served for personal gain or that it will make their life momentarily easier, or even possibly that the adjustment would serve the greater good, then they could subvert everything they had hoped to achieve. Trust is the key to integrity; consistency is the key to trust, and trust, if breached, can be hard to rebuild and valuable time could be lost. One of the biggest problems we have in the world today is the lack of trust; unfortunately, very few people tend to even give it a second thought.

The most important thing to remember is that all the problems we face in this life have a single root cause: the separation that exists between man and God caused by our choosing to do things contrary to His ways, otherwise known as sin.

Being trusted is great, being a person of integrity is great, but for those attributes to have a real impact for spiritual capital in our society, they must be lived out in our daily lives, not just in church and church-related activities but in every waking activity in our lives.

The foundation of the integrity group idea was for Christians in positions of influence to challenge and unify and use their positions in ways that would honor God. These would be people who would lead by example and educate, support, and motivate others. These people, for the most part, are critical thinkers, people who can explain clearly what the problems in society are and how they can be rectified; thus, they're in the best positions to make the greatest impact. There's always strength

in numbers when trying to fight a problem like corruption. People in positions of influence who can come together to be supportive of, and encouraging to, other people will have a much greater chance of success.

This idea was actually inspired by yet another book that I highly recommend, *The Locust Effect: Why the End of Poverty Requires the End of Violence,* by Gary Haugen. He started the International Justice Mission after serving as Director with the UN Special Investigations Unit during their investigation of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. His inspiration to start this organization came as he observed the carnage that had occurred and realized the following:

> "What was so clear to me was the way these very impoverished Rwandans at their point of most desperate need, huddled against those advancing machetes in that church, did not need someone to bring them a sermon, or food, or a doctor, or a teacher, or a micro-loan. They needed someone to restrain the hand with the machete—and nothing else would do. None of the other things that people of good will had sought to share with these impoverished Rwandans over the years was going to matter if those good people couldn't stop the machetes from hacking them to death. Moreover, none of those good things (the food, the medicine, the education, the shelter, the fresh water, the micro-loan) was going to stop the hacking machetes. The locusts of predaztory violence had descended—and they would lay waste to all that the vulnerable poor had otherwise struggled to scrape together to secure their lives. Indeed, not only would the locusts be undeterred by the poor's efforts to make a living, they would be fattened and empowered by the plunder."[26]

Gary Haugen's International Justice Mission's experiences have also uncovered another very interesting dynamic that's very important to understand.

26 Haugen, Gary (2014). *The Locust Effect: Why the End of Poverty Requires the End of Violence* (p. 255).

"Over time, we have noted a dynamic we call the 15-70-15 Rule. The rule has no real scientific precision, but it expresses the observation that, within criminal justice systems in the developing world, it seems that about 15 percent of the personnel wake up everyday intent on using their coercive power and authority for purely predatory purposes. Another 15 percent wake up every day with an earnest intent to do good and to serve the public. The vast majority—the remaining 70 percent—are simply waiting to see which of these two factions is going to prevail in dominating the organizational culture and its system of rewards. The rest of the 70 percent are going to go along and join in the dysfunction and abuse as long as the brutal and corrupt 15 percent is prevailing—because it will benefit them to do so and it would be risky to oppose the dominant ethos. In such a context, it then looks and feels as if 85 percent of the entire law enforcement force is aggressively and irredeemably committed to the ways of venality and violence. In fact, the situation is actually much more dynamic than it may at first appear. Indeed, if it appears to the middle 70 percent that the virtuous 15 percent are going to prevail and control the culture and systems of rewards and punishments (job retention, promotion, benefits, assignments, discipline, termination, etc.), then they will, with surprising alacrity, begin to clean up their acts to stay out of trouble. And a system that once looked like it was 85 percent full of crooks and brutes can rather quickly look like it is made up of a critical mass of tolerably decent public servants. A virtuous circle can emerge in which the political will to support a reasonably functional criminal justice system develops and is strengthened 1) by cadres of progressive national leaders, 2) by a middle class that is sick of endemic corruption, and 3) by the competitive advantages that await developing economies

with functional rule of law."[27]

This idea stuck in my mind and was also confirmed to a certain degree by my own experiences in Africa. I also believe that 15-70-15 isn't just a behavioral ratio that's limited to those in the justice systems but is true throughout the societal systems in all societies.

The church would be strengthened if we could get those people who claimed to be followers of Christ and are in positions of influence to come together and work together with intentionality, and the Gospel would be given a great witness of its transformational power.

Putting It into Action, An Integrity Group

What are some practical things we can do to implement these ideas? We had a meeting at our house with 12 interested people in July 2016, a few months before the civil unrest began (we had to leave in 2017). There were many more who were also interested in coming but were unable to attend.

It was probably one of the most inspiring meetings that I've ever attended because these 12 individuals, many of whom were meeting each other for the first time, demonstrated an incredible amount of excitement at the idea of making a real difference.

One of the challenges to ideas is finding practical ways to implement them and put them into actionable endeavors and programs. I'm hoping that this book will help people gain a firm understanding of why development has been so elusive and that money, which can be a great tool at times, isn't the answer to the problem. A successful society can only be built when there's a strong foundation to build upon.

Jesus gives what is called the "Sermon on the Mount" in chapters 5 through 7 in the Book of Matthew. These are two chapters of teachings on our relationship to God, our relationship to other people, on values that we should live by, and how we can and should impact the world for His kingdom. Then He summarizes His message with some great advice, God's advice: Build Your House on the Rock when He said:

> **Matthew 5:24-26:** *Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the*

27 Haugen, Gary (2014). *The Locust Effect: Why the End of Poverty Requires the End of Violence* (p. 254).

rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it didn't fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and doesn't do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.

We live at this present time in this world and have been given instructions that, if followed, can keep us on the road of the wise man and keep us from failing like the foolish man.

The topic of the meeting that we had at our home with these people of influence was, "What if we were to organize people who call themselves Christians to form an organization that would promote integrity; people who would stand up to corruption and live out godly principles in their daily lives where God has placed them?" Cooperation and collaboration would play a major part if it was to be successful. Corruption is a lucrative business for many individuals and giving that up would be hard. Many who would try to be honest in an office or position where graft and corruption is rampant would be quickly suppressed by others. It was amazing to see the reactions of many, particularly those who were people of faith, as I've presented the thoughts written in this book to many people in positions of influence. Critical thinkers who had never heard ideas like these had never really given much thought to the impact on their country of the behavior of people in high positions. They found the idea of an integrity group to be very encouraging once they understood.

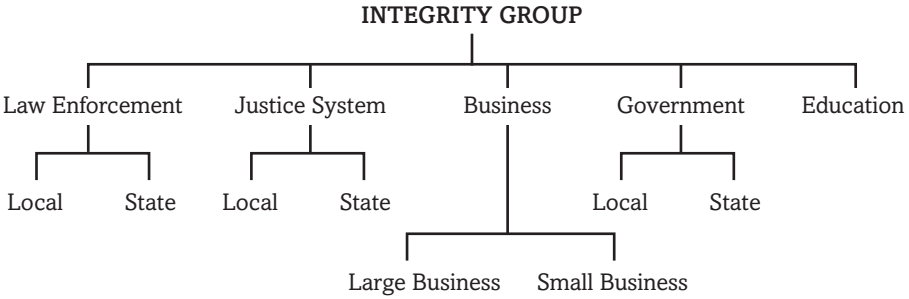
The laity is the majority of people sitting in the majority of churches. Imagine the impact they could have if they took their faith to work. Imagine how much more effective discipleship and evangelism would be with the testimonies given of righteous behavior by many who are almost expected to take advantage of their positions for personal gain.

A comparative summary of the impact on the church and society by the behavior of its members before and after the renewing of the mind could be summarized something like the following:

SINFUL BEHAVIOR	GODLY BEHAVIOR
Damages our testimony.	Validates our testimony to the world.
Destroys societies.	Improves the quality of life in our societies.
Destroys economies.	Improves economies.
Cripples the church.	Makes the church more effective.

I made a simple graphic to provide an example of a possible integrity group structure. There would be an overarching organization and several subgroups. The larger group could comprise all the members of the smaller interest-specific groups. This would contribute to a huge support structure with people of influence at every level of society. There's strength in numbers! Sharing ideas, experiences both good and bad, and encouragements from sharing stories would be inspirational to everyone.

The smaller groups would be those who are involved more closely within an area of influence. The justice system, for example, would involve judges and magistrates, lawyers (barristers), prosecutors (State Counsels), and other court officials. Government could include those who serve within the political systems from the local levels right up to the state level and ministerial positions. A group under the heading of government could also be broken down into subgroups, such as state and local levels.



The structure would be designed and defined as the integrity group feels what would be the most effective in each of their societies. The key, I believe, will be in numbers; the fact that there's strength in numbers

can't be said too many times! Corruption is profitable, and those who choose to fight against it will meet lots of opposition. Support from others in positions of influence will be critical for success.

Much of this book has been about culture and cultural values. If we look back at some of the definitions of culture on page 25, we're reminded that culture *is* culture because it involves the general attributes of a society, of the group. We have seen that those struggles relating to the lack of development are largely related to the accepted or in many cases tolerated behavior in the culture. Some negative behaviors are often allowed because of the power held by those who practice them at the top. There's then a trickle-down effect where those who don't have much power or influence will also participate in corrupt behaviors because they imagine that's the only way they'll have something for themselves or their families—a working out of the old adage, *if you can't beat them, join them*. That attitude is also demonstrating a lack of hope for anything better by those who are at the less influential levels in society, but hope can be found in the 15-70-15 percent statistic. It doesn't take an overwhelming majority to sway a culture, especially if the change will benefit the majority.

I traveled with some colleagues to take part in a church conference in Liberia in February 2020. The conference was the annual gathering of representatives of about 160 churches that comprise the Liberian Evangelical Baptist Convention. I was excited, because I was going to have the opportunity to present the material in this book in an abbreviated form. I had four scheduled meetings over the course of four days with a group of about 80 individuals who served as deacons in their own home churches. Several people who ran large businesses and the mayor of the town where we were meeting were also in attendance, but the majority of the people were representative of the materially poor. I started by dissecting the values that are commonly held in Sub-Saharan Africa and examining the negative impacts they produced in society. I received lots of feedback, and many individuals shared stories of their own personal experience with corruption on different levels. It also helped me achieve credibility with the group, because they saw that I clearly understood what many of them lived with on a daily basis.

This topic lasted for two sessions. At the beginning of the third session, Ernestson, a contractor, stood up and said that he appreciated how I understood the challenges they faced, but he asked the question, "What can we do about it?" I asked him to be patient for that day's presentation.

I gave an overview on spiritual capital that day, and at the end I asked if there were any questions or contributions. Ernestson stood up again, and with a finger pointing at me, he said, "You need to prepare lessons for this so that we can teach it to others. I've never heard anything like this before, but it shows us that there is hope." I was excited to say the least! On day four, I gave an overview of trust and the Eight Pillars of Trust as outlined by David Horsager in his book, *The Trust Edge*. The mayor, who was sitting in the front row, was frantically writing down notes as though he didn't want to miss a thing during this last presentation. There was a great deal of conversation surrounding these new ideas at the end of this last session. The word hope was heard several times. It was a confirmation to me that God was working in this.

I brought up the idea of starting an integrity group, but every one of those people knew that it would require the participation of those people who were in positions of greater influence in their society if something like this was going to really work. They could certainly participate at their own level, and I'm sure that the Lord would use it to bless others and to grow His kingdom. That would be no small thing, but if it were to have a larger and more far-reaching impact, it would need to involve those individuals who were in positions of power and greater influence.

Another take-away for me from these meetings was that people had seen the decades of programs, aid money, and projects that were intended to bring about the development of infrastructure and improve the overall health of underdeveloped countries and its peoples' quality of life. However, they also saw that those programs, projects, and money, ultimately produced no sustainable improvements, which left people feeling discouraged. It's clear that those things don't work for their intended purpose, given the amount of time, energy and money that's been poured into places like Sub-Saharan Africa for such a long time. The level of enthusiasm exhibited by people, whether on the giving

or the receiving end, demonstrates that many people still believe that the aid money might actually work at some point.

This was also evidenced by the reactions at different points during my presentations. When I went over the problems and the cultural values that led to them at the end of the first two days, the participants expressed both an understanding of that and a frustration from knowing that change seems impossible, echoing, "So, what can we do?".

The final two presentations, "Spiritual Capital" and "Trust," presented radical ideas: things they had never considered before but whose value they immediately recognized upon hearing. Once they understand that the problem is caused by cultural values that are resistant to development, then the primary steps they need to take if development is to happen are to adjust those values. Jesus addresses the fact that people need food and clothing and that God Himself is aware of that in the "Sermon on the Mount." Then he makes a statement that I find powerful:

> **Matthew 6:33:** *But, seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.*

We receive a directive that will lead to our material needs being met in the middle of a sermon that focuses on behavior and our relationship with God and other people. I believe that Jesus is telling us that godly behavior, when applied to life, is a powerful thing. Seeking the kingdom of God and His righteousness requires us to examine ourselves and our values; this will transform our values if we respond positively. Once people are convinced that change is possible, they are likely to ask, "How can we get started? What steps can we take?" This is the exciting part!

I think about the opportunities that will be provided for evangelism and discipleship as people begin to see the radical changes in some of these influential people's behavior and the wonderful testimonies it will give to the Gospel's life-changing power. It would provide opportunities for people to become who God created them to be, to improve not only their lives but also the lives of the people around them, and to be used as whole life disciples to grow the Kingdom of God.

If a society's problems that adversely affect its institutions are caused by the cultural values generally held by that society, then it only stands to reason that the solutions to those problems also reside within its people's behavior. This is the great opportunity that the Church has to reach the unreached, to disciple believers, and to present the Gospel to the lost, backed up with a powerful testimony of lives transformed. We need to adjust our own thinking regarding cross-cultural ministry if we really want to see the kingdom of God grow and Gospel movements started and empowered. This is especially important if our focus has been on doing things for people and giving them things that they should be able to do and provide for themselves, which does not allow them to reach the potential they have to become who God created them to be.

The greatest gift that evangelism can provide is to lead people to a relationship with their Heavenly Father through a relationship with Jesus. The greatest gift discipleship can provide is the knowledge and understanding of God and His Word that will enable them to participate in His work, using the talents and spiritual gifts He has given them.

Salt and Light, Are We?

The next four sections focus on some foundational concepts that will challenge us with God's Word and help us remove any sacred/secular divide we may have. It will help make clear His expectations for His people and who He created us to be.

A missionary colleague in our same country emailed me a few years ago after he'd watched a webinar that was introducing a new book. He knew I was working on connecting the dots between development and behavior and had already started the idea of the integrity group with a few friends.

The book was *Taming the Beast: Can We Bridle the Culture of Corruption?*[28] by Dr. Robert Osburn, Jr. I'd ordered a digital copy because that was the easiest and fastest option I had while living in Africa, and I was immediately impressed with the culturally appropriate storytelling style. I thought the author surely must have spent a lot of time living

28 Osburn, Jr., Robert (2016). *Taming the Beast: Can We Bridle the Culture of Corruption?*

somewhere on the African continent. The book is extremely informative and accurately portrays the corruption that exists in Sub-Saharan Africa and, I imagine, in many other places as well. Being so impressed and knowing it would be helpful, I bought several printed copies of the book and asked some of the medical volunteers from the USA who frequently came to our hospital if they would be willing to bring them along.

I then passed out copies to many of my friends in positions of influence, not only to gain their thoughts on the book but also to help them to consider the problems that exist in the country regarding corruption. It's interesting how few people have actually taken the time to ponder the causes of the effects that they struggle with daily. People seem to feel that "it is what it is" and nothing can be done to change it.

The feedback I received from several of the people who read the book was very encouraging. They said the book was very educational and also provided both lots of inspiration and some ideas for practical application.

Dr. Robert Osburn, Jr., has been highly active in the fight against corruption in both organizational and personal capacities. He started the Wilberforce International Institute with the goal to train students to return to their home countries. You can learn more at the organization's website,[29] which has many resources if you have interest in this type of ministry. I was connected to Bob personally through an African national woman whom I'd known before she went to the USA for school. We were talking one day about ministry things after she returned to West Africa, and I shared about this book I'd recently read. She was surprised and said, "You read that book? The author is my mentor!." Dr. Osburn has since become a friend and unwitting mentor to me.

Dr. Osburn wrote another book in 2021, *Developing Redemptive Change Agents: Discipleship that Helps Nations Flourish Rather than Flounder*.[30] Redemptive change agent is a term he coined that has great depth of meaning; we'll look at it more closely in the next section. He connects the idea that those of us who are redeemed by Christ's work

29 www.wilberforceii.org/about

30 Osburn, Jr., Robert (2021). *Developing Redemptive Change Agents: Discipleship that Helps Nations Flourish Rather than Flounder.*

on the cross can make a difference in society today. He goes into great detail and looks at history that explains how, for most Christians, their faith has become more of a personal spirituality rather than a restorative medicine for ailing nations. He also details the various influences and events that have caused the church to withdraw from the public square and into a more private and personal idea of faith.

We have a WhatsApp discussion group with a few men who are involved in forming an Integrity Group in the country where we served. I will occasionally post something to initiate a discussion, and recently I posted the following verse along with the short commentary and the following question.

*Matthew 6:21, For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. "*What we value is reflected in how we live. Jesus could not act in any other way than as we see in the Gospels, because what He is, He does. If we are to be Christlike, what implications does that have for us in our daily life*?"*

One of the responses to the post surprised me, given the person who posted it, but it was supportive of the idea Dr. Osburn presents regarding personal and private faith. Following is the response.

"This presupposes full-time ministry if my thinking is right. But we are fending for life at every twist and turn, trying to fulfill our God given responsibilities as heads of our families. To my mind we need just to be Christlike in our interactions and actions so that we can influence people with our ways and God will take the glory."

This person holds a very public and influential position in his country's government and has served in leadership positions in both his church and denomination. After his statement was made, some others in the group jumped into the conversation claiming that we're all meant to be in full-time ministry. These secondary responses were encouraging, but the man's answer troubled me. How do you get people to engage the world with their faith in a public and proactive way, rather than just assuming a defensive posture like his response?

I mentioned this discussion to Dr. Osburn, who responded by directing me to a chapter in his new book that examined some case

studies of people who actively took their faith into the public square. An example of one of them was the story of William Wilberforce[31] and the group of friends he was surrounded by. The greatest inspiration and challenge in this story is William Wilberforce's own testimony. I will recount an abbreviated version here because it is an important example of God using people in public positions in a powerful way.

Seeking God's righteousness requires us to examine ourselves and our values; this will transform our values if we respond positively.

William Wilberforce grew up in the church but never knew Jesus as his Lord and Savior. He enjoyed politics and was elected to the British Parliament at age twenty-one, the earliest age allowed. He enjoyed the battles in politics and was known as a great speaker with a quick wit. His sister became ill a few years into his political career, so he decided to take her on a trip to the French Riviera where he hoped the better climate would help her recover. His mother and a female cousin of his wife also traveled with him. Not wanting to be bored during this trip, Wilberforce decided to invite an Irish friend to accompany him. Wilberforce asked Isaac Milner, the brother of Joseph Milner (his former schoolmaster) to join him when the friend declined. Isaac Milner, an Anglican clergyman, was known as a brilliant Cambridge scientist and mathematician.

Unaware of Milner's evangelical convictions, Wilberforce was surprised to find that someone whom he could respect intellectually could also embrace a Christian worldview. They read and reviewed the Greek New Testament and Philip Doddridge's *The Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul* during their time together.

Wilberforce made a second trip and once again asked Milner to accompany him. Wilberforce was convicted of his sin by the end of the second European trip. He acknowledged "a sense of my great sinfulness in having so long neglected the unspeakable mercies of my God and Savior."

England was a very secular and immoral society during this time period. The aristocrats of British society had little regard and no respect

31 Osburn, Jr., Robert (2021). *Developing Redemptive Change Agents: Discipleship That Helps Nations Flourish Rather Than Flounder* (pp. 175-183).

for people of faith. The Anglican Church was deeply entwined in the government and was much more political than spiritual in nature, so William Wilberforce now had a problem.

Knowing how his aristocrat friends felt about people of faith, fear and shame tormented him until he quietly came to the door of John Newton, who was popularly associated with the faith he'd embraced and who his aristocratic friends despised. John Newton, once a slave trader himself, had become a pastor after his own conversion and had pastored the church William Wilberforce attended as a youth.

John Newton encouraged him by telling him to stay in politics because the Lord had raised him up for the good of His church and for the good of the nation.

Wilberforce came to Christ in 1785, six years into his political career, and God was at work in his life for the next two years as he grew in his faith. Wilberforce wrote regarding his perceived calling in 1787, "God gave me two great objects, the suppression of the slave trade, and the reformation of manners."

Wilberforce also knew that he was limited in his own talents and recruited several other believers with influential positions in society who became known as the Clapham Sect, a group of believers in influential positions committed to serving the Lord. Together they started over 69 different initiatives with which to glorify God and transform the nation. In addition to his abolition work, he and the Clapham Sect were consistently involved in church work that included the Church Missionary Society and sending missionaries to India and Africa; the British and Foreign Bible Society; the Proclamation Society Against Vice and Immorality; the Sunday School Society; the Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor; and the Vice Society.

What struck me the most is that these people were not thoughtless about the giving of their finances, time, and talents to the Lord's service. Their group was designed and run with the full intention of glorifying God and making a positive difference not only for their nation but also for the world through the abolition of slavery throughout the British Empire.

It took 20 years of Wilberforce's tireless efforts, along with the

help of the Clapham Circle, before England's Parliament finally voted to abolish the slave trade in 1807. The proposed legislation was voted down 12 times during those 20 years before finally passing. This is an amazing example of perseverance and commitment!

It still took another 26 years to emancipate the existing slaves and abolish slavery entirely in the British Empire. Wilberforce faced intense opposition from politicians and businessmen, endured assassination attempts, and had long bouts of frail health during this long struggle. Nevertheless, his steadfast resolve to end this societal evil eventually won out and, in July 1833, just three days before his death, the House of Commons passed a law emancipating all slaves in the British Empire.

Wilberforce's faith in Jesus Christ changed him from a careless, wealthy young politician into a tireless, compassionate public servant. He developed and used his gifts of leadership and persuasion and the combined talents, skills, and shared convictions of the Clapham Sect members to champion dozens of efforts to improve society. He was a moral leader who even voted against his own political party when principle required it. His partnership with his Christian brothers and sisters in the Clapham Sect serves as a model for Christians working together to bring about meaningful reform in society. He persisted for decades in the tasks to which God had called him, despite illness, physical threats, and even once taking a beating from a sea captain! The slave trade was a large and lucrative business, and many people would be impacted financially if it was stopped, yet he persevered despite this enormous opposition, empowered by his deeply held beliefs.

I also found it both interesting and encouraging to see how God uses different people connected over time to fulfill His purposes. John Newton, the former slave trader turned pastor, was another soul radically changed by his faith decades earlier. Having been William's pastor when he was just a child, Newton had the relationship already to be in position to encourage Wilberforce when the time was right. I'd read a biography of Newton many years ago and discovered in depth how the slave trade was such a brutal and evil business. He was inspired to write the famous hymn, "Amazing Grace," because of the overwhelming experience of being forgiven after such awful personal sin. It would also seem that

John Newton was the perfect person to be an encourager to someone whom God had called to abolish the same occupation that he himself had been involved in.

I hope you are as inspired as I am by William Wilberforce and his Clapham Sect brothers and sisters in the radical giving of their lives in service to the Lord. One secular account of Wilberforce's life states that "some say that his faith to which he converted played a part in his work to abolish slavery." I laughed when I read that because it was clear that the Holy Spirit clearly grabbed him and transformed his heart and mind after his conversion.

The next question that may come to mind may be, Is there really a biblical connection between Christianity and politics, or Christianity and economics? Let's look at what Jesus said about His followers being salt and light.

> **Matthew 5:13-16:** *You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet. You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.*

It is hard to think about the idea of being salt and light without questioning what those entail. Does the idea of being salt and light look different for those in paid or professional ministry than for the lay person?

Jesus talks about his followers being the light of the world and that this light can't be hidden. He also says that our good works are like a light that inspires people who see the good works to give glory to God. Then, in John 3: 19-21, Jesus adds another dimension to our being light:

> **John 3:19-21:** *And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked*

things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God.

Jesus tells us that some people will hate the light because it reveals the evil behavior in their lives, so because of this rejection, we can expect persecution to come our way if we make efforts to have our light shine. In **Matthew 5:10-11**, the two verses preceding those about us being salt and light, He tells us,

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

We see that this is exactly what occurred in their lives in the story about William Wilberforce and his group. Their good works designed to glorify God also brought serious persecution into their lives. Jesus' teaching using the metaphors of salt and light clearly is something to take seriously because it has huge implications in the lives of His followers.

Salt was used for several different things throughout history, including as a flavor enhancer, a preservative, and an antiseptic. However, the idea I want us to think about here is that the work of either salt or light can only occur when they come in contact with something else. Salt can't act as a preservative, have any medicinal value, or be a flavor enhancer if it isn't applied to food or a wound. Light similarly can't reveal anything or make anything visible until it shines on an object. Jesus' teaching that salt becomes useless when it loses its saltiness and a light also becomes useless when placed under a basket is a clear call to action.

John 15:18-19: *If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.*

If our faith, then, is a personal or private thing, the way we live our lives might cause us to be known as a "good" person if we're respectful and kind to our neighbors, but it would be less likely to directly bring glory to God and very unlikely to bring persecution into our lives. After all, who would want to persecute or be angry at a kind and "good" person?

God's Love and God's Hate

We hear a lot about God's love. God loved humanity so much that, even in our sinfulness, He sent His Son Jesus into the world to be a substitute sacrifice for our sins so we could have our fellowship with Him restored. God's love never fails us. His love is unconditional, and nothing we can do can cause Him to love us more, and nothing we can do can cause Him to love us less. **1 John 4:7-12** tells us that those who are in His will become a manifestation of His love.

> **1 John 4:7-12:** *Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.*

Jesus, Himself, when asked about which law was most important, pointed out how the Ten Commandments relate to love: Love God with your whole being and love your neighbor as yourself. This is all very important and is certainly a hallmark of Christianity. God loves all that is good, God loves His creation, God created man in His image, so we, as His image bearers, should love the things that God loves. However, only loving the things that God loves is incomplete.

The Apostle Paul adds another dimension in Romans 12: 9, *Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good*. This verse encourages

us to be genuine, or authentic, in our love and to hold fast to the things that are good, but there is an interesting instruction inserted between those commands, "abhor what is evil." Abhor is the word used in the ESV version of the Bible, while the words "detest" and "hate" are used in some other versions. These words are synonymous. The Apostle Paul could have written "stay away", "avoid", or "frown on" evil, but instead, he uses a word that carries a stronger and more purposeful meaning: "Abhor" it, "hate" it. The Apostle Paul was a Pharisee in his former life, a scholar of the Old Testament, and as such, knew that the hatred of evil was in line with God's character as it was recorded in Ps. 97:10, Ps. 101:3, and Amos 5:15. We are given a more specific list of the things that God hates in the Book of Proverbs.

> **Proverbs 6:16-19:** *There are six things that the Lord hates, seven that are an abomination to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil, a false witness who breathes out lies, and one who sows discord among brothers.*

We looked earlier at values, good values that contribute to a good life for societies and individuals, values that promote development, good governance, and healthy economies that provide for the protection and the physical needs of people. We also noted that there are bad values that bring about immorality in society, values that cause people to suffer hardship and struggles in daily life, economies that struggle to grow, and corrupt justice and law enforcement systems that burden the population. We can now see more clearly the connection between the things God loves and the things God hates, between values that are good and values that are bad.

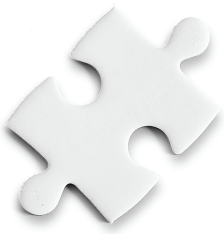
In the list of things God hates in Proverbs 6, we can see that each of those items are behaviors that cause harm to people, people whom God loves. If we truly understand how much God loves the people whom He created in His image, it becomes clear why He hates the things that bring harm to them, and if we're to represent Him well as His image bearers, we must also hate those things. I would even dare to suggest that the things God loves and the things that God hates are inseparably related in

that the things He hates only exist because of the things He loves. Love and hate, in contrast to like and dislike, are stronger words that express feelings or personal convictions. The stronger we feel about something, the more likely we are to act on it with serious intention.

I want to refer to the story on page 44 on the opposing cultural values regarding "authority" to demonstrate this point. That's where I'd learned about an attempt by a person in authority who was abusing his position as the tribal land steward, along with the local justice system, to try and seize a plot of land that was given for farming use by the tribal chief. Farming this land was an important source of food and income for a materially very poor and physically challenged woman.

I could have taken a position of dislike and felt bad for the family and maybe offered to pray for them and let them know that I hoped it would all work out well. However, experience told me that she would most likely lose her land, and the false charge that her sons were being charged with would lead to a large fine that they couldn't afford to pay. They could even end up serving time in prison. This would lead to even further hardship for an already struggling family, so I knew I needed to become involved. I knew that God hated what was happening and that He loved these people, and I was in a position in which I knew I could be of help, so I did.

Isaiah 1:17 teaches us, "*Learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow's cause.*" God hates evil because of His love.



DEVELOPING
Our Toolbox

Bearing His Image

Dr. Osburn has graciously given me permission to use material from his new book, *Developing Redemptive Change Agents: Discipleship That Helps Nations Flourish Rather Than Flounder.*[32]

Having been involved in construction for most of my life, I have a great appreciation for understanding the principles of a trade, having the right tools, and knowing how to use them. Properly used tools can ensure that the project is done well and the goal is achieved correctly, and they can make the job so much easier!

I saw the need for developing these last sections because, as I mentioned earlier, sometimes we as the church or as individuals struggle with some of the very things that can help make us more effective as our Creator's image bearers. For example, the gentleman who, in his response to the discussion question, felt that those who aren't in full-time ministry don't need to be concerned with the issues of society outside of the church, to get involved with them or who may believe these issues are outside the scope of the lay Christian. I suppose that a big part of this thinking is because we may find ourselves doing okay in loving the things God loves department but may find ourselves a bit weak in the hating the things God hates area of our lives.

32 Osburn, Jr., Robert (2021). *Developing Redemptive Change Agents: Discipleship That Helps Nations Flourish Rather Than Flounder.*

The idea behind discipleship is to study Jesus' life and character and the mind of God as revealed to us in scripture so that we can become more and more like Him through the power of the Spirit. We will be a mediocre and incomplete representation of Him if we neglect some qualities of His character and only focus on particular areas. Yes, we're human and not divine, we're seriously flawed in our sinfulness, and we will never escape that in this life. Nevertheless, we should strive for the full picture if our goal is to develop a Christlikeness.

I will use several directly quoted sections from Dr. Osburn's new book, as rewriting something only to avoid looking like you're not borrowing from someone else's work is both dishonest and lacking in integrity. I strongly recommend getting a copy of his book if you're interested in increasing and expanding the effectiveness of your church or your own personal life for the sake of the Gospel, and in either case, in strengthening the church. His book is well done and very comprehensive on a subject that I believe is seriously neglected, and, in many cases, completely missing in the church today. I also want to ensure he receives full credit, and I hope you will also look more deeply into the Wilberforce International Institute[33], as they have a wonderful and impactful global ministry.

The exciting thing for me as I was reading his new book was the fact that I was already finished with my own, or so I thought, and discovered that the topic of his book is exactly what God had laid on my heart several years ago.

I want to start with a series of quotes from the beginning of his book that I hope will capture the idea he presents in defining a redemptive change agent.

> "The term (Redemptive Change Agent) is a disciple of Christ who takes the risk to solve problems in their home society or workplace on the basis of a Christian worldview." (Page 16)

33 https://www.wilberforceii.org/about/

> "One reason for the term redemptive change agent is the fact that discipleship has been narrowed to personal spirituality while the scope for action by Christ's followers has expanded. We need a new fresh term that transcends the unbiblical divide between personal spirituality (thought of as sacred) and social change (thought of as secular)." (Page 11)

> "The term redemptive change agent potentially has the power to help followers of Christ incorporate into their concept of discipleship, a commitment to personal, communal, and national transformation by solving real problems on the basis of a Christian perspective and with the resources of the Christian community. Lest I be misunderstood, I am not suggesting the utopian promise of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth through human effort." (Page 18)

> "Today our twenty-first century world desperately needs God's truth to inform social change." (Page 16)

> "What is the relationship between redemptive change agent and evangelism? Redemptive change agents are not primarily evangelists, but they share responsibility for evangelism and in some cases are particularly well-suited for it. Since, as we will make clear, redemptive change must be properly and consciously grounded in a Christian worldview, doors to evangelism are likely to open." (Page 12)

Dr. Osburn's encouragement to look at one chapter in his book as a potential source of biblical motivation to encourage people in positions of greater influence to see the biblical incentive for them to be engaged in daily life as ministry was a blessing to me.

The idea of Christians in positions of greater influence living out lives with transformed values can have an incredible impact on other people, their community, and possibly even their nation, or even the world, when

done intentionally for the glory of God. The story of William Wilberforce is a testament to that.

I was intrigued as I was reading Dr. Osburn's book by a system he developed that he calls the 1234 Model of Human Flourishing. Just as we're created in God's image, so we've been given various capacities, qualities that God has, that He shared with humanity. The rest of this section, except for the graphic, is directly from Dr. Osburn's book.

1234 Model of Human Flourishing[34]

"This model of human flourishing, that I developed a number of years ago is rooted in the biblical passage that most clearly accounts for our humanity. Genesis 1: 26-28, a critical text that reveals human identity and purpose in the space of 118 words.

> *Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."*

There are three major themes in these three verses:

1. Humans bear God's image.
2. Men and women are designed for a grand goal.
3. Men and women partner together to produce offspring who carry forward God's image and His goal for humans.

To be a useful model it needs to accurately account for our humanity and apply in all spheres and institutions of life. Ideally, it should also

34 Osburn, Jr., Robert (2021). *Developing Redemptive Change Agents: Discipleship That Helps Nations Flourish Rather than Flounder* (pp. 58-68).

be memorable. In this case 1 + 2 + 3 + 4 = 10, which is the number of fingers each person possesses.

According to this 1234 model, each person:

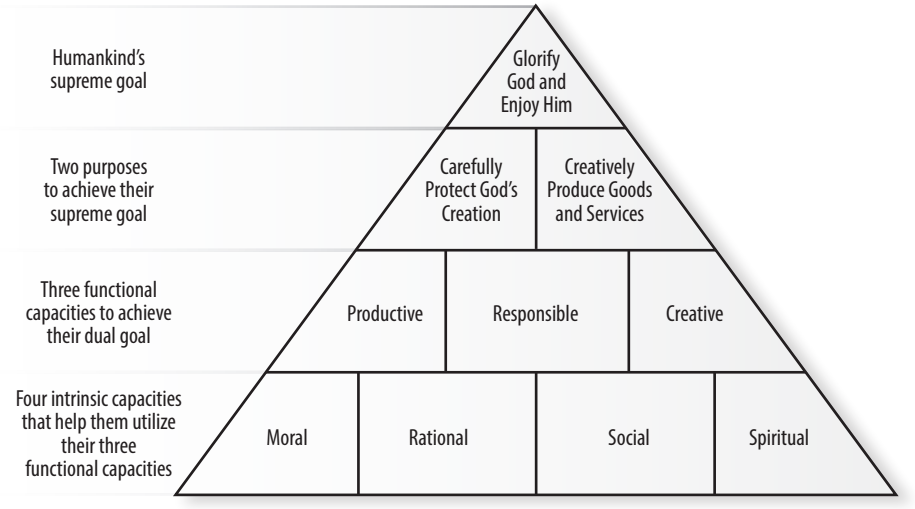
1 = Is created for one supreme goal: Glorify God and enjoy Him.

2 = Has two purposes in order to achieve that supreme goal:
- Carefully protect God's good creation.
- Creatively produce goods and services that advance human flourishing.

3 = Possesses three functional capacities in order to achieve their two purposes:
- Productive (Producing more goods and services than we need).
- Responsible (Exercising wise dominion and leadership).
- Creative (Imagining and creating goods and services).

4 = Possesses four intrinsic capacities that help them utilize their three functional capacities.
- Moral (Recognizing ethical limits and boundaries for human behavior).
- Rational (Using reasoning and intellect to understand the nature of reality).
- Social (Pursuing our humanity through the human community).
- Spiritual (We are designed for God who transcends our horizons (possibilities) that are limited by time and space).

I took the liberty of making a small graphic to visualize Dr. Osburn's model.



"There are many implications in this model. First, each of the three lower levels serves the level above it. For example, in order to glorify and enjoy God (our grand goal), humans must first undertake our dual purpose as protectors and producers. Second, the model should clearly guide our understanding that redemptive change aims at the recovery of our humanity. Recovering our humanity means being able to pursue our one grand goal and two purposes while using our three functional and four intrinsic capacities. Redemptive change is never fully itself unless it helps humans honor our transcendent Creator whose image we bear.

Why is glorifying God and enjoying Him so central to redemptive change?

1. First, by watching us glorify God rather than ourselves, the world learns that their only hope is in God. (Romans 5:5) All other joys will eventually disappoint.
2. Secondly, we glorify and enjoy Him by functioning as we were designed. Think of a well -made, well-designed automobile, the reliable function and spectacular design of the machine brings attention to the maker who rightly deserves the glory, and not the machine itself.

3. A third way we glorify God is by being productive. (John 15:8) Productivity or fruitfulness reminds people that God has structured creation with tremendous fertility and abundance. Productive enterprises, whether material or spiritual, profoundly express love for our neighbors. (John 15:17)
4. A fourth way of glorifying God is by translating and teaching God's word so that people can apply it. We are not mere bio-chemical machines that need programming but, rather powerful beings whose rationality is a marvel only produced by God.
5. Fifth, we glorify God by taking responsibility for our world. Jesus was given "authority over all flesh that was given to Him," (John 17:2) that included the faithful accomplishment of His task. (John 17:4) Only a God of magnificent wisdom would dare create beings with such power and potential as His servants."

The Ugliness of Satan and the Beauty of Christ

Having a narrow or too focused idea of what glorifying God entails has been one of the greatest contributors to the sacred/secular divide in their lives for many people. It has also been a contributing factor in keeping Christians from fully engaging in the public square and the workplace and being the salt and light we're intended to be. The idea Jesus presents of us being salt and light is a contrast between followers of Him and the world.

I may use examples from the country where we lived, yet the principles contained in this model can be applied to any person anywhere on Earth. Anywhere you see societies struggling or failing politically or economically, you will see aspects of the 1234 Model functioning, but it may only be functioning as a 234 model with the "1" missing. All humans are created as image bearers of God; therefore, they contain the same intrinsic capacities. However, they may still be influenced by their fallen nature, which will result in a corrupted application of their

functional capacities, which, in turn, will impact both the "protective" and "productive" purposes in a similarly corrupted way, giving a corrupted result and bringing no glory to God.

This model will always be at work in every society from the standpoint of the four intrinsic capacities, but the outcome of number 1, glorifying God, can only happen when those intrinsic capacities are influenced by values that are redeemed and transformed by the word of God and the Holy Spirit.

God allowed Adam and Eve to have a will, the ability to choose, when He create man in His image. To validate their relationship with God through obedience, He gave them the freedom to enjoy all of what He created except for one thing: not to eat the fruit of the tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

Satan was already resident on the earth at the time God created Adam and Eve. He was cast down with a third of the angels after he became prideful of the beauty and power God had given him, which caused him to seek the glory that was reserved for God alone. Satan hates God and all the good that God loves. Satan hates and wants to destroy anything he can. Satan's destiny is an eternity in Hell, but why is Satan still here? Why does God not just cast him into the pit now? An interesting article by John Piper sheds some light on that. It's also an encouragement to those who want to honor God in their daily lives.

John Piper: "Why then does God tolerate Satan? The key is that God aims to defeat Satan in a way that glorifies not only His power, but also the superior beauty and worth and desirability of His Son over Satan. God could simply exert raw power and snuff Satan out. That would glorify God's power. But it would not display so clearly the superior worth of Jesus over Satan. That will be displayed as Christ defeats Satan by His death and then by winning superior allegiance from the saints over the lies of Satan."

He points out that Satan's defeat has been in two stages. The first, by Christ's death on the cross. Colossians 2:15, He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him. By defeating the power of sin, humanity now has a provision for eternal life, death itself has been defeated.

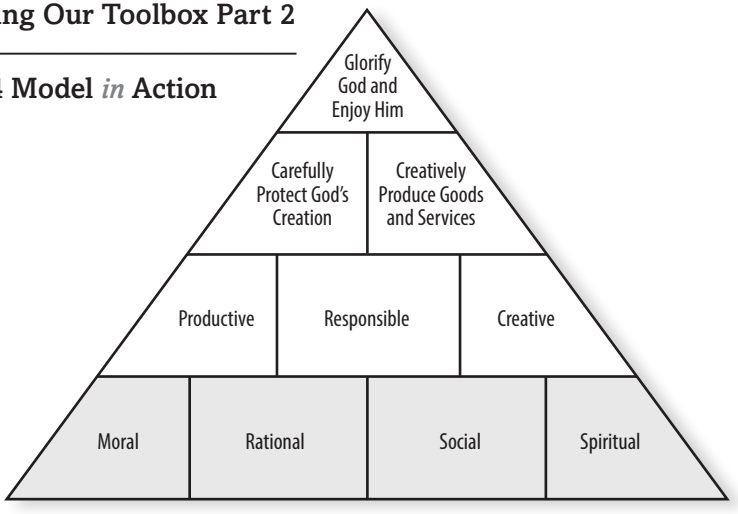
1 Corinthians 15:55-57: O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Satan continues to be humiliated, although Jesus' sacrifice on the cross is a finished work for the payment for our sins. John Piper also says, "Without sin and law to condemn us, Satan is a defeated foe. He is disarmed. Christ has triumphed over him, not yet by casting him into hell and nullifying his influence on earth, but by letting him live and watch while millions of saints find forgiveness for their sins and turn their back on Satan because of the greater glory of Christ. That is a second stage of defeat: the conversion of people by the power of the Gospel of the cross. Jesus says to Paul that his mission to the Gentiles is 'to open their eyes, so that they may turn…from the power of Satan to God' (Acts 26:18). This is what happens when God removes the blindness caused by the devil and gives us the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ (2 Corinthians 4:4-6). This enables people to see the ugliness of Satan and the beauty of Christ so that their choosing Christ glorifies not only God's power, but Christ's superior beauty and worth over Satan."

How is Christ's superior beauty seen in the world today? I believe that His people, as salt and light in a broken world, provide a contrast between good and evil. Light in a bright room does not have the same impact as light in a dark room. As God's people stand up to be redemptive change agents, they provide that contrast between the darkness of evil and the beauty of Christ. We'll be able to see Dr. Osburn's 1234 Model at work as His people live their lives in a way that is glorifying to God.

Developing Our Toolbox Part 2

The 1234 Model *in* Action



The Four Intrinsic Capacities

Leaving Dr. Osburn's material now, in this section I will begin tying together how the things that I've written about in this book are related to values, culture, corruption, and development. Referring to the 1234 Model graphic, we will see how this works in accordance with Dr. Osburn's 1234 Model. I want to begin at the bottom as it appears on the graphic with the four intrinsic capacities for the purpose of demonstrating how the model functions.

When we make choices in life, we're usually unaware of the process we use to make them; they're usually instinctive. These four intrinsic capacities—*Moral, Rational, Social and Spiritual*—are programmed with a database, if you will, one with which they act and influence the three functional capacities above them on the graphic—*Productive, Responsible, Creative*. This database comprises several different components that have been informed by several different inputs. These include our value system or worldview, our formal and informal education, and our life experiences, which also include our social development and family life.

I'd like to look at how godly and ungodly values impact real-time behavior and ultimate outcomes by taking a practical look at how that database affects these four intrinsic capacities. As children of God, we

can use our moral capacity that has been trained in God's Word to know right from wrong based on God's perspective. In this view, our morals are objective and rooted in the Word of God. However, this viewpoint will be subjective from the unbeliever's position, conditioned on their cultural values, worldview, or whatever is convenient or most profitable for them at the time.

Without sin and law to condemn us, Satan is a defeated foe. He is disarmed. Christ has triumphed over him…letting him live and watch while millions of saints find forgiveness for their sins and turn their back on him because of the greater glory of Christ.

As followers of Jesus, our ultimate desire as we use our three functional capacities to live out our two purposes is to achieve the one supreme goal of glorifying God and enjoying Him. Those same four intrinsic capacities will inform the unbeliever's functional capacities with a different value system. In that case, the two purposes may resemble those of a Christian in protecting and producing, but the outcomes will be fundamentally different because their goal will be self-preservation and self-satisfaction.

As we see how the four intrinsic capacities are used to direct the actions in the three functional capacities, it should be noted that the moral capacity, which is a direct product of a person's value system, is the most vital of all when determining outcomes. A person's value system or worldview has a profound impact on the next two intrinsic capacities on this level, Rational and Social.

For example, our rational capacity, or how we utilize reason in life situations, could go in two entirely different directions depending on our value system. A good West African pastor friend and I discussed why some people believe it is okay to steal under certain circumstances. He told me that if a person needs or desires something and sees that another person possesses a great deal of it or has the financial ability to replace it, then they'll feel completely justified in taking it for themselves. The idea of theft is conditional in this case, or subjective according to the situation. However, a person who wants to honor God in their behavior

will be guided by the objective commandment in Exodus 20:15, *You shall not steal*. and will trust that God will meet that need. Matthew 6:33, *But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you*. This is an example of the reference to honesty in "Which basis for morality," page 59: honesty as the best policy vs. honesty being the only policy.

The social intrinsic capacity is similarly influenced by the moral capacity. Loving our neighbor as ourselves and putting other's needs before our own rather than seeking our own self-interest will have a profound impact on how we interact with others. This will impact how those in positions of greater influence make decisions or develop policies or govern.

The fourth intrinsic capacity in this level is different than the first three in relationship to values. We need some biblical understanding as to what that means when looking at this aspect of our creation as spiritual beings. The Bible tells us that God is spirit and that He created humanity as spiritual beings with a physical body in which their spirit dwells. Scripture also tells us that we're born with a relational separation from God because of the separation that happened when Adam and Eve sinned; we were born spiritually dead, and for us to have that relationship with Him restored, we must be reborn spiritually.

Because of this, the spiritual intrinsic capacity will have an enabling effect on our entire being. We're told as believers that when our relationship with God is restored, by faith, through our remorseful act of asking for forgiveness through Jesus' sacrifice for our sins on the cross, the Holy Spirit comes and dwells in us and we're made spiritually alive in Christ.

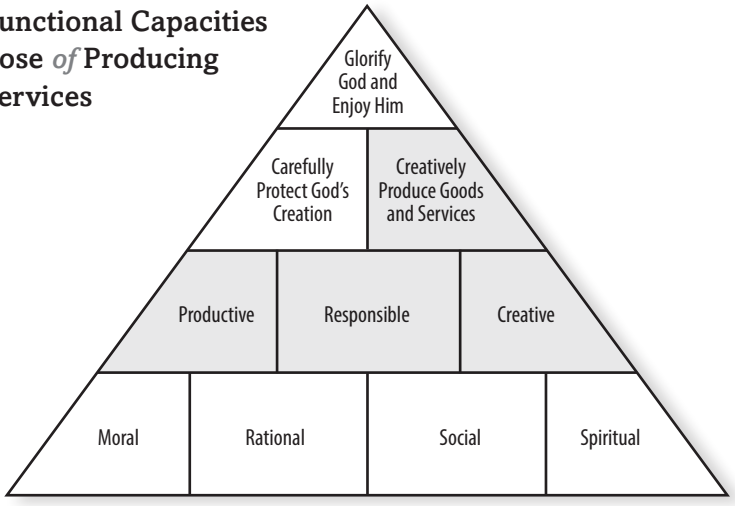
We can then experience the transforming work of the Holy Spirit in our lives in this state. Our values will be reshaped, Romans 12:2, as we grow in our relationship with Jesus, study God's word, and begin making changes to our worldview in the process. Our values, as they change, will inspire and inform our moral capacity. Our value system can now be objectively based on God's Word when this happens; however, we must remember that we still possess the sin nature and may still operate on a subjective basis, which, as we have witnessed, is the inspiration for

the Integrity Group idea and this book. The unregenerate heart, or that which is still in the spiritually dead state, can't experience this heart and mind transformation and therefore will always have a subjective morality. Yes, there may be some behavior change if it seems beneficial, but for that very reason, it will remain subjective to circumstances whenever the benefit motivation changes.

In a practical look at how that database affects these four intrinsic capacities, I'd like to look at how godly values and ungodly values impact real-time behavior and ultimate outcomes. As children of God, we can use our moral capacity that has been trained in God's Word to know right from wrong based on God's perspective. Our morals are objective and rooted in the Word of God in this view. However, from an unbeliever' position, this viewpoint will be subjective and conditioned on their cultural values, worldview, or whatever is convenient or most profitable for them at the time. For this reason, I will not specifically address man's supreme goal of glorifying God and enjoying Him, because this is, in and of itself, only a potential outcome that is subjective to how the four intrinsic capacities and the three functional capacities inform the two purposes.

Developing Our Toolbox Part 3

The Three Functional Capacities *and the* Purpose *of* Producing Goods *and* Services



The next level up in Dr. Osburn's 1234 Model graphic is the Three Functional Capacities—*Productive, Responsible, and Creative*—which are the means by which humanity would be able to carry out their two purposes of producing goods and services and protecting His good creation on the next level above them. God gave these capacities to humanity in yet another dimension of His image because He is productive, responsible, and creative. He endowed humanity with these capacities so they could carry out His directive in Genesis 1:28a, *Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it.*

God was not just sending them off to make many children in this command. He was also telling them to participate in the further development of the creation work He started; to go and develop villages, towns, and cities, build their societies, and use the raw materials He has provided to be productive and produce the food, goods, and services to meet the needs of people and their societies.

Producing goods and services was the first purpose God gave to humanity to be used to glorify Him. Look back to **Genesis 1:28,** *And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."* We see God's instruction to Adam and Eve to use, fill, and develop the created environment He provided for them. Then in Genesis Chapter 3 we see how Adam and Eve sinned and the curse of separation from God's perfection was brought upon them and the earth itself, but the expectation of production for their needs was still a requirement.

God did not abandon mankind even in the fallen condition that now came upon creation, but by grace and in His mercy, He gave people different abilities and skills that they could use to provide for and contribute to their own, their families' and others' needs—abilities to provide goods and services that are needed by and useful to all mankind.

We read in the Old Testament stories how people spread out across the Middle East, developing villages, towns, and cities. Some people raised food crops and some raised livestock. Some were builders and carpenters, while others, as technologies developed, began industries creating fabrics and developing metal products. An increase of wealth

came with the increase of goods and services. Great worldwide wealth has been generated over the thousands of years since the Garden of Eden, yet many societies struggle with great material poverty. I will discuss this condition of material poverty more in the next section regarding the purpose of protection. I will focus here on the first purpose given, producing goods and services.

People hold many different views regarding wealth. Some believe there is a limited amount of wealth in the world and that it just changes from one hand to another. They believe that some people have large amounts of it while others have very little. Some people believe that for the materially poor to gain wealth, it must be given to them. I mentioned earlier that this is one of the motivations behind many mission trips. The truth is that in God's design, material wealth is something He intended for humanity to create. Wealth, if created using God's approved practices, can grow in ways that will glorify Him. People will have not only what they need but also extra to share with others. This applies to both material goods and services.

For example, good red ground with sufficient clay content, which is common in many areas of Sub-Saharan Africa, can be mixed with water and formed into bricks in a simple wooden mold. These bricks can be used to construct a building. With the input of labor, the raw materials of red clay soil and water mixed and formed in a mold create an increased value of the soil. Further value is created when skilled workers use those formed bricks to produce a dwelling that can provide shelter for people. Another example begins with a logger cutting down a tree in the forest. The felled tree can then be sawed into planks. Those planks in the hands of a skilled person can then be planed into smooth boards and sold as a raw material that carpenters or furniture makers can use to create further value with their skills to produce many other goods needed by others. Once again, using a God-provided raw material (a tree) with the input of labor can produce increased value and material wealth.

Most of the time when we think of the idea of being productive, it involves the manufacture of physical items or activities in the food industry such as farming, fishing, or other food-associated work. Many

services are also required for a society to thrive, however. Teachers are needed to educate and prepare young people for future productive lives. Politicians can produce policies that will help societies flourish. Lawyers can assist people with legal matters. Judges can produce honest rulings to protect members of society from corruption. Police, bankers, doctors and nurses, and people working in retail are all needed to help all the elements of a society to work safely and smoothly, resulting in people living healthy and productive lives. There are a multitude of ways people can produce goods and services for the betterment and growth of a society.

One of the key incentives people have to be productive, whether in the production of goods or of services, is to be able to earn money or to produce something with which to trade in order to acquire other goods and services they may need. There are, however, complicating factors that can keep societies from enjoying the opportunities to be productive. Pages 30 through 61 dealt with opposing cultural viewpoints, and I looked at the impact of many cultural viewpoints that were detrimental to development, and I shared stories for each. In each instance, corruption was the major challenge to protection and production. The most predominant hinderances to production are either directly or indirectly caused by corruption.

A country like the one where we lived in Africa has been blessed with many natural resources that they could use to be very productive. Unfortunately, some people in leadership over the years have found it to be personally beneficial to sell these resources to other countries that want them rather than investing them in their own economy.

Petroleum and natural gas are available and needed to power factories that could produce materials like steel and aluminum that could, in turn, be used to produce vehicles, machinery, and other durable goods. The shortsightedness or greed of a few can affect millions. It is corruption, and corruption is evil. It is something God hates because it harms the people He loves. This abuse of power and authority may put money into the pockets of those who perpetrate it, but the economic effect is a major reason that people remain in poverty.

Those people contribute to a lack of employment and the loss of potentially good paying job opportunities by selling and exporting resources that could be used for the development of industries. This contributes to the challenge of what is called demand sharing: the situation in which maybe one family member gains stable employment in a limited job market while their siblings or extended family have little or no income. This situation then, in many cases, lays the burden of financial responsibility on the employed person to meet the other family members' needs for things like education or healthcare. I personally know of a couple who worked at the hospital where we lived. The wife has five younger siblings and both of her parents are deceased. She and her husband have almost no take-home income now because she has had to guarantee payment of the medical bills or pay school fees for several of her siblings, thus reducing her take-home pay. The fact that the corrupt actions of a few can affect millions can't be emphasized enough. The majority of the population remains materially poor in many countries despite the fact that resources are plentiful. Real hope exists in each of these situations, but it will require action by God's people in positions of greater influence working together.

Some people in leadership over the years have found it to be personally beneficial to sell these resources to other countries that want them rather than investing them in their own economy.

The production of goods and services is a way that humanity can glorify God when people responsibly and creatively use the talents and skills that He's given them in a manner consistent with biblical instruction. We do not often think of secular jobs as ministry, but ministry in the New Testament is serving God and meeting the needs of others with the intention of bringing glory to Him. Some synonyms for the word "minister" are caring for, aiding, and comforting others. Providing for the physical needs of others is a form of ministering to them; providing medical care is ministering; providing for the legal needs of people is ministering; providing protection from criminals and others who would do harm to them is ministering; selling construction supplies or food

items are forms of ministering to other's needs, and the list goes on. It is fulfilling our created purposes and glorifying to God when we consider our secular work ministry and we do it in a godly way.

Many countries are blessed by God with abundant natural resources that are exploited by many for personal gain. Imagine how an Integrity Group could grow to encompass a large group of influential people at every level. A group dedicated to honoring God in both their private and professional lives could help a nation thrive as God intended!

God gave Moses a song to write in Deuteronomy 31:19-22. It tells of how He blessed the nation with a land of milk and honey, yet they turned away from Him to other gods and suffered for it.

> **Deuteronomy 31:19-22:** *Now therefore write this song and teach it to the people of Israel. Put it in their mouths, that this song may be a witness for me against the people of Israel. For when I have brought them into the land flowing with milk and honey, which I swore to give to their fathers, and they have eaten and are full and grown fat, they will turn to other gods and serve them, and despise me and break my covenant. And when many evils and troubles have come upon them, this song shall confront them as a witness (for it will live unforgotten in the mouths of their offspring). For I know what they are inclined to do even today, before I have brought them into the land that I swore to give. So Moses wrote this song the same day and taught it to the people of Israel.*

Humanity today suffers from the same fallen nature as the children of Israel did, and we may suffer for it for the same reasons, but is this God's desire for His creation? Jeremiah 29:11 was written to the Israelites in exile but shows the heart of God for His people: *For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you*. Every wedding we ever attended in our African country had this verse incorporated in song and sung during the program. How many of us have children and wouldn't desire for them to do well and thrive in life? If, in our sinful humanity, we want this for our children, how much more would our Heavenly father want that for us?

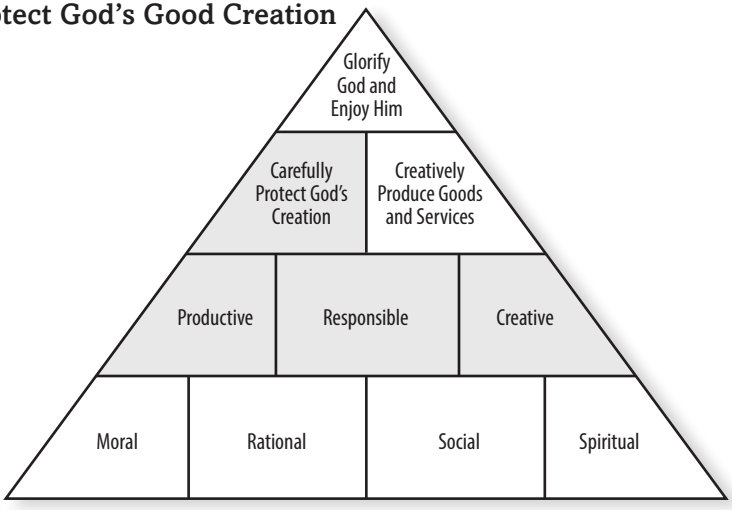
Referring to the 1234 model, how do the challenges to productivity just outlined interrupt the flow from intrinsic capacities to functional capacities, to carrying out our purposes as humanity to glorify God? Does this thinking help to possibly develop strategies for addressing the challenges? Can you think of any other challenges that hold back human productivity?

One of the things we don't often consider is personal responsibility. It is often overlooked when we think about development aid. "Aid" can easily lead to dependency if we're not careful, which is completely in contrast to the ideas of ***productive*** and ***responsible*** and God's intended purposes for His image bearers. There are cases when aid is needed, but it should be provided in a way that lifts people up in the direction of being able to fulfill their purposes in creation, not to be a lifestyle.

We often use comparative thinking to decide who's capable of giving and who isn't. People must be able to live out the godly mandate given to them in Genesis regardless of their income level or social status. I told the story on page 78 of a small village where we helped a church start-up and did a water project. In response to my suggestion that the church think of a project they could do for their village, I'd been told by the people that they aren't required to give, but, because they're poor, they're only to receive. The villagers ultimately contributed many hours of labor to bring the project to completion. What was the result? A project that to this day, 19 years later, is still providing clean water throughout the village. They learned that, even as people who are materially poor, they could take on the responsibility to produce something valuable for their village that not only benefits the population but also brings glory to God.

Developing Our Toolbox Part 4

The Three Functional Capacities *and the* Purpose *to* Protect God's Good Creation



Prior to the fall, before Adam and Eve disobeyed God, creation was perfect and the mandate He gave them would require work, but the hindrances that the fall brought into being weren't there. The only protection required prior to the fall was that of guarding their hearts against disobedience. Brokenness entered into every part of creation after the fall, resulting in the need for many areas to require protection.

As previously noted, the three functional capacities in Dr. Osburn's model—*Productive, Responsible, and Creative*—determine how our two purposes of protecting God's creation and producing goods and services are carried out. I showed in Toolbox: Part 2 how a person's values inspire and inform their intrinsic moral capacity. Their moral capacity, in turn, directs their rational and social capacities, and the condition of their spiritual capacity enables objective change to their morality. We can now clearly understand the process by which people operate in everyday life, at work and at home. We can also begin to see how the transformation of hearts and minds can also have a direct impact on a society's condition. There is no doubt that corruption is involved somewhere if

it's struggling with development; conversely, we'll know that some godly values are at work the better a country is doing economically and when it's enjoying more political stability. This doesn't necessarily mean that Christians are directly having an influence in that society, but it does mean that some cultural values are present that reflect godliness. Just as values can be either good or bad, the functional capacities of ***productive*** and ***creative*** can also go in either direction. ***Responsible***, as a functional capacity, that is, being accountable, trustworthy, and dependable, will primarily be present when godly intrinsic capacities are in use. It will be sufficient to say that corruption is "responsible" for the poor outcomes in productive and creative activities when ungodly behavior is inspired by ungodly values.

I want to discuss the relationship concerning the two purposes along with the three functional capacities and some real life struggles we've seen, because the connection between the three functional capacities and the two purposes are so intertwined. I will do it in a way that will show how the idea of an Integrity Group could not only show Jesus to their society but could also improve the quality of life for all. All three functional capacities may not come into play in every situation but one, ***responsible***, as just mentioned, will only be present, and will always be present, when ***protecting*** and ***producing*** are done with godliness.

Protecting God's Good Creation

I will start with Protecting God's creation and see what things fall under the category that God's Word instructs us to be protectors of. We often think of the physical earth when we think of God's creation: its atmosphere, plants, animals, and people, as well as the heavenly bodies—the sun, the moon, and the stars. However, God also created institutions to guide our daily lives and societies: marriage and families, justice systems and governments. God also gave us instruction and information in His written Word, given through and written down by His human instruments. We have a mandate to care for the Earth and exploit it for our use and provision, but He has also given us instructions through His written word regarding the care for our families, the relationship between husbands and wives, and how to raise our chil-

dren. He also gave us instruction for the operation of our societies through governance, law enforcement, and justice systems. He has given us the church, the vehicle He has chosen to spread the Gospel. He has told us to defend the Gospel and sound doctrine.

There's a long list of good things He has given us that Satan, in his hatred of God, wants to disrupt or destroy. God's people show the contrasting beauty of Christ through their good works, and they glorify God in the process by protecting these things. The following sections will briefly look at different areas of God's good creation that have been and continue to be under attack. These sections are intended to be an overview and not comprehensive, because many of these issues are complex in nature. By God's grace, He has given each person gifts and abilities to be helpful in a variety of areas.

Protecting The Earth

A good starting point in listing things we're to protect is the one that usually comes to mind first, protecting the Earth itself. God created the Earth as a home for humanity. We see how God gave humanity authority over His creation in in both the Old and New Testaments.

> **Genesis 1:28-29:** *And God blessed them. And God said to them, Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.*

> **Psalm 89:11:** *The heavens are yours; the earth also is yours; the world and all that is in it, you have founded them.*

> **Psalm 24:1:** *The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein, for he has founded it upon the seas and established it upon the rivers.*

> **Romans 1:20:** *For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.*

God created and owns the Earth and all that is in it. He gave humanity dominion over it and responsibility for it, so we can understand that this responsibility is limited not only to the physical world but also to the people and institutions that He also created. However, the idea that God is made known through the physical creation is a very important reason to protect it, because our care for it will reflect our love for Him. We need to act wisely with the resources He has given us, using our creativity to carefully produce the goods needed by society. We need to be responsible in how we do this to carefully protect it for use by future generations. We must also be careful to understand that the resources He's given us are for our good and for our use and not be caught up in the secular worship so prevalent today of the creation itself.

Protecting The Widows, the Orphans, the Children, and the Poor, the Weak, and the Defenseless

Another area we're instructed to protect is the widows, the orphans, the children, and the poor, the weak, and the defenseless in society. **Psalm 82:3-4,** *Give justice to the weak and the fatherless; maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute. Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked*. Many people, when they think of the groups of people just mentioned, think of giving material things like money or food. Some have started orphanages for children who have lost their parents and have no extended family able or willing to take them in so they can be raised in a loving, family-style setting. These things are great if done well, but those verses include something else to consider. The words "justice, maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute" and "rescue the weak and needy and deliver them from the hand of the wicked" imply that something very different is also required from God's people. This is where the love and hate connection will, or won't, come into play.

However, first we need to understand who it is that is to do the protecting and defending. Is it pastors? missionaries? NGO's? Those thought of as being in full-time ministry? This is, unfortunately, popular thinking among too many Christians. Personal experience has shown

me that those individuals or organizations just listed aren't in the best or most influential positions to be the most effective in serving this sector of society. I've shared stories of how we became involved in a few instances when people who fell into this vulnerable group were being treated unfairly by the system and we were able to help them receive justice, but how many people did not receive justice and were cheated out of their land or had the crimes committed against them go unpunished? A few individuals may find help, but the vast majority will be left on their own if we rely only on a few individuals in society or organizations to serve in defense of an entire population where corruption is rampant.

A real solution to these issues can happen, however, if lay people who are in positions of greater influence and in the professions where the corruption is occurring step up and see their responsibility to God in daily life. It can really make people take notice and truly make a difference when the light of the "non-professional" Christian shines.

Protecting the Oppressed

Ecclesiastes 4:1, *Again I saw all the oppressions that are done under the sun. And behold, the tears of the oppressed, and they had no one to comfort them! On the side of their oppressors there was power, and there was no one to comfort them.*

Oppression is the exercise of authority or power in a burdensome, cruel, or unjust manner. Oppression can be objective; for example, governments, armies, police, employers, or others may use their authority in a cruel way. Oppression is, unfortunately, a common experience for many of the materially poor in a society. I've witnessed on several occasions people in positions of authority taking advantage of those who are unable to protect themselves. This should be a concern and an action point for all Christians in positions of greater influence to be active in fighting against.

A society must be able to produce wealth, and people need to be able to feel secure in their society for an economy to function well. I talked about this at length in the section "Spiritual Capital and the economy." on spiritual capital: Economies can't grow and personal wealth can't grow in an atmosphere of corruption. People working like tax collectors in mid-

level administrative positions or those in charge of special programs who take advantage of those positions for personal gain are some of the most active in oppression. The oppressed in this case aren't the same as the vulnerable, such as widows and orphans, but are primarily people who are materially poor or just at a lower social level of society. They do their best to work and earn a living but, in many places, if money is needed to buy protection or assistance, these people can be in a difficult place. As an example, Isaac, the meter reader I discussed in "Views of Competition," was unable to pay a bribe he was asked to pay when he was trying to apply for funds for business development from a government-sponsored program. Another example I described in Opposing Cultural Values, "Authority" was when a tribal land steward, complicit with the local court, tried to defraud our friend's mother of her land. It was after this that her son told me that the materially poor are seen as "chickens" to be slaughtered by the rich and by some in authority at their whim. God hates this kind of evil; do we?

Protecting Marriage and The Family

Despite what the world may say, God created the institution of marriage; therefore, He is the one to define it. He gave us the definition in the Book of Genesis. The world has its own definition of marriage, but God has ordained marriage as a union between one man and one woman. Like other satanic attacks, Satan brings God's word into question: "Did God really say that?" If we believe that God's word is true and inerrant, we must stand firm in that. The idea of tolerance has crept into the thinking of many over the years as the world has tried to redefine the idea of marriage. Jesus tells us in **Matthew 12:30,** *Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.* Just as God uses people for His purposes and glory, Satan also uses people for his purposes. Jesus leaves no place for neutrality; He states that people are either for or against Him.

Marriage and the family have been and continue to come under attack in many other ways, as well. Divorce, adultery, pornography, pre-marital sex, fatherless homes and drug and alcohol abuse are some

of the very destructive devices at work against marriage and the family. Society would have us believe that there's no harm done when a family falls apart or children grow up in a single-parent household. Nevertheless, both mothers and fathers have a distinctive role in the healthy development of their children if done in godly ways. Various studies have shown that young men who grow up without a father figure in their lives are at increased risk for suicide, comprise 90% of runaways and homeless youths, will have an 85% chance of struggling with behavioral disorders, comprise about 75% of all high school dropouts, and are at high risk for substance abuse and detention in juvenile institutions. Strong families are one of the most important institutions for societies to have healthy economic, social, and political systems.

Protecting Sound Doctrine

Some people may not think about this topic under the purpose, Protecting God's creation. Even though the scriptures were written by men, we know from **2 Timothy 3:16,17,** that *All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.* God not only created the writers and but He inspired their writing, so we know that defending sound doctrine is another way we're called to protect His creation. Many references to this can be found in the Bible.

> **2 Timothy 4:3:,** *For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.*
>
> **Titus 1:10:** *For there are many who are insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision party.*
>
> **Titus 1:13:** *This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, not devoting themselves to Jewish myths and the commands of people who turn away from the truth.*

The last two verses speak to the early church, but Satan is hard at work bringing all sorts of perverted truths into every society where there is a church. Sound doctrine is foundational to a correct understanding of God's word, and God's word is foundational to a godly value system; thus, it is important to defend the church against the attacks that come against it.

We must know what sound doctrine is according to the Word of God to be able to defend sound doctrine. Sound doctrine isn't what we believe is sound doctrine, but sound doctrine is what the Bible teaches. Therefore, it is important for us to study the Bible and ensure we sit under the teaching of those who teach it well. It is vitally important that biblical teaching isn't just the teaching of information. The Bible must be taught by people who understand the accurate application in their cultural context for it to have its transforming effect on people's lives. One of Satan's long-time strategies has been to twist Scripture in ways that alter its meaning and remove its power.

Protecting The Faith, The Gospel

Defending our faith or the Gospel is typically thought of as belonging in the area of apologetics. The verse most people think of regarding the idea of defending the faith is **1 Peter 3:15**,

> *but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.*

Apologetics is the discipline of defending Christian doctrine. It means to give a biblical and logical defense of the Christian faith. Several years ago, I used to listen to a radio program that used 1 Peter 3:15 as their theme verse. The show was a call-in program to which people could call in and ask the pastors questions they had about the Bible.

The Holy Spirit can certainly use our having a solid and deep understanding of God's word to give good explanations of the Bible to draw people to Christ. However, in this book's context I want to look at this verse and those preceding it to see the context it was written in. I believe the idea of an Integrity Group and this passage go hand in hand in several different ways.

> **1 Peter 3:13–17:** *Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.*

The interesting thing about this passage is that it mirrors the Beatitudes because it references persecution for those who want to live righteously.

> **Matthew 5:10-11:** *Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*

Living righteously as an individual in an otherwise corrupt environment, one where others may benefit from corruption, can be very difficult for those individuals and will likely result in some persecution as they try to live righteously. The potential for evangelistic outreach in this situation can be found in 1 Peter 3:15. This thought came to me one day while reading this passage about giving someone an answer: It occurred Ito me that for someone to be able to give someone an answer, they would first need to be asked a question.

If we think about it, righteous living by people who would otherwise be expected to enjoy the benefits of corruption, might prompt the question, "Why do you behave the way you do?" This could then open the door for that person to be able to give the reason for the hope that is within them. All the intrinsic capacities God has given us to utilize can come into play here; Moral (knowing right from wrong), Rational (intellect), Social (interaction with others), and Spiritual (guidance from the Holy Spirit).

Living righteously can be very difficult and will likely result in persecution.

Protecting Each Other From Sin

Another area that the Bible instructs us in regarding protection is having a loving concern for each other. There are several directions this can take. One is prevention, that is, supporting and encouraging each other when facing the temptation of sin. The second is to help restore those who may have fallen into sin already. Redemption and restoration are what the Gospel is all about. Life is complicated, and as I mentioned in the last section, can sometimes be very difficult. One of the ideas behind the Integrity Group is to be a support and protection for others who want to honor God in life and in the workplace. Sometimes the pressure to give in to corruption or look the other way is great. A few verses relating to support and restoration follow.

Proverbs 27:5–6: *Better is open rebuke than hidden love. Faithful are the wounds of a friend . . .*

Luke 17:3: *Pay attention to yourselves! If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him.*

Galatians 6:1: *. . . if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.*

Hebrews 3:13: *Exhort one another every day, as long as it is called 'today,' that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.*

There are many other verses that tell us to help and encourage one another. Philippians 2:3-5, 1 John 3:16, and many more focus on personal motivation and our humble support of others. The fact that this theme is repeated time and time again in the Bible lets us know that it is an important area with great potential for struggles, an area that we shouldn't neglect. An Integrity Group's success will require incredible diligence over each person's own life. I wrote in "A Perfect Cross-Cultural Partnership" about the importance of consistency, being people of integrity whereby our thoughts, words, and actions are all in sync. The fastest way to lose trust and withdraw spiritual capital from society is by a lack of consistency, making compromises by having flexible values. For this reason, protecting each other from sin and being supportive in times of temptation are key for the success of an Integrity Group. There are many opportunities for us to be involved in the various ministries of protection and in developing protectors.

CONCLUSION

Dr. Osburn has graciously allowed me to share an appendix from his first book, *Taming the Beast: Can We Bridle the Culture of Corruption?,* that provides many ideas about how godly character can be used to implement change. It has many ideas that can be put into action in different situations. As I've written, nothing is simple when working cross culturally for the several reasons I've discussed. There are many hidden challenges that a person from one culture may not recognize in another. Therefore, I believe it's so important to find, empower, and encourage those national leaders who can understand the issues and have a heart to serve God. These are the people who can help implement the process of transformation because they don't have that cultural barrier between themselves and the citizens of their societies. They can speak directly into the lives of the people.

APPENDIX

Practical Strategies for Taming the Beast

This material comes, with permission, from Dr. Bob Osburn's *Taming the Beast: Can We Bridle the Culture of Corruption?* [35]

I've made some comments *in italics* before each of the following sections that I hope will help people recognize what challenges may arise along the way and help make them to be more effective.

Students

Bearing in mind that there are different teaching and learning styles, new ideas may be rejected from the start if they conflict with the norm. For the most part, my wife was told that her success in teaching reading was because "she was like a grandmother" to the children. Her attempt to teach the teachers about phonics was only accepted by a couple of teachers, those who were critical thinkers and recognized how it worked and saw its value. The majority who were rote memorization teachers were also rote memorization learners to begin with and were challenged by teaching a theory. The schools will present the biggest challenge because the following great ideas are all based on creative and critical thinking. It will likely be slow going and finding the right teachers and empowering them will be the key to success.

1. Begin student groups and campus clubs that conduct studies about and create strategies for conquering corruption.
2. Create competitions that reward students who develop the most promising solutions to corruption.
3. Undertake student essay contests on the questions "What are the True Costs of Corruption?" and "How Do We End Corruption?".
4. Watch films about corruption (e.g., the 2014 Russian film Leviathan), and then convene discussion groups that explore why corruption is so pervasive and what needs to be done to stop it.
5. Develop student-led websites and social networking platforms for a student-driven wealth initiative to end corruption.

35 Osburn, Jr., Robert (2016). *Taming the Beast: Can We Bridle The Culture of Corruption?* (pp. 227-233).

Government

I think this is one of the easiest areas in which to get an Integrity Group going. We learned in West Africa that a great number of people in positions of influence are critical thinkers. Their abilities afforded them an advantage over the majority and are also the very thing that will help them understand the real issues when they're explained. However, it's also wise to remember that corruption is profitable, and pushback could be great by those who only have their self-interest at heart. It's also at this level that a transformation of hearts will gain the greatest exposure and have the greatest potential influence on the 70%! Number one here, is what we envision for the Integrity Groups.

1. Form accountability groups for government employees who are under great pressure to participate in corrupt activities.
2. Develop laws that require politicians and upper-level government employees to make full disclosure of their wealth and property. This transparency will go a long way toward building the citizens' trust and confidence in their government.
3. Develop an advisory board of religious leaders who are specifically authorized to report evidence of official corruption to the media.
3. Require temporary lending agencies to provide partial loan assistance for low-level government officials who are not paid timely salaries. They will repay loans when their salaries are finally paid.
4. Develop compensatory funding mechanisms (CFMs) that will provide supplementary funding for a given period of time (perhaps five or ten years) to ethnic communities, or tribes, who refuse to insist on having their "time to eat." That is, if groups renounce traditional demands for special hiring favors, kickbacks, and other corrupt mechanisms for using government funds to favor their ethnic groups at the expense of other groups, they will receive a special distribution from the government. The government will also train teachers in those communities to implement an anti-corruption curriculum (see more under "Education").

Churches/Religious Institutions

This is where transformation should start. We have several pastor friends in Africa who are critical thinkers, and I have shared experiences from a couple of them. Natural critical thinkers are a small segment of any population, so it stands to reason that there are also memorizers in the seminaries. In fact, I was told this by one of our critical-thinking pastor friends. Pastors in Sub-Saharan Africa can have great prestige as men of God, and self-interest can be a challenge. We have a retired missionary friend who recognized this while he taught for many years at seminaries in our West African country. He even created a course in logic to try to help his students be able to make their Bible teaching relevant to their future congregations. The idea was to find those critical thinkers and help them be agents of change. Truly understanding the root of a problem is the key to developing the solution.

1. Discipline members who participate in acts of corruption and who refuse to repent after regular admonitions to do so.
2. Provide a venue for dispute resolution when fellow Christians become involved in disputes involving corrupt acts.
3. Collaborate with national and international associations of churches to create corruption amelioration funds (CAF) that provide financial assistance to members who suffer directly because they're not willing to participate in corruption.
   a. Establish standards of proof, along with methods for examining the evidence of material harm caused by corruption.
   b. Limit liability, which means that the fund will only cover, say, 50% of the legitimate loss due to resisting corruption.
   c. Establish institutional checks and balances that limit the decision-making power of any single individual; otherwise, the fund risks becoming corrupt. Have regular audits conducted by reputable international auditing agencies.
   d. Back this up by an international reinsurance fund that will help to insure countrywide corruption amelioration funds when they are faced with heavy claims that threaten the viability of the fund.

e. Create educational materials about how to confront and deal with this topic for use in local churches.

4. Encourage pastors to regularly preach and teach about corruption.
5. Create support groups for those who have renounced corruption and who need regular encouragement from others who also were once active in corruption.
6. Institute annual "End Corruption/Promote Integrity" Sundays, during which church members will be invited to make "No Bribe" pledges: "I'll neither give nor receive bribes."
7. Encourage pastors to refuse communion to those who engage in bribery and corruption and who remain unrepentant.
8. Develop national associations of pastoral leaders who commit to preach against and fight corruption in their countries.
9. Ask seminaries and Bible colleges to develop coursework on corruption, bribery, and extortion.
10. Ask networks of Western churches to appeal to their governments to enforce their own anti-corruption laws, thus making it difficult for corrupt, non-Western government officials to hide corrupt funds in Western institutions (see under "International").
11. Bribe Box: If someone asks for a bribe, then the church member anonymously puts the name of the corrupt official in the "bribe box" at church. When the same name appears at least five times, then church leaders have sufficient evidence to approach the government with a meaningful accusation against the public official.
12. Form an international church network wherein Western churches provide refuge for those who suffer for their attack on corruption.
13. Develop "truth commissions" that research the extent of corruption within churches, and then call out church leaders to repent for allowing this evil to persist within their churches and denominations.

Business

I met two different types of businesspeople in Africa where we lived and two subtypes under each: the big businessman who is honest and the big businessman who's corrupt; there are also honest and corrupt small businesspeople. When talking to many businesspeople, I found that the ones who tried to do business honestly already understood that honesty was more profitable. They all thought it was a great idea when I mentioned the idea of Integrity Groups and were quick to understand the connection between behavior and development. Integrity Groups would provide wonderful opportunities for both evangelism and discipleship for Christians in the secular marketplace by simply living for Jesus throughout daily life as whole-life disciples. There are many Christian business resources available in which ideas and encouragement can be found, but there is no substitute for community groups on the ground together for mutual support.

1. Explore, then join the remarkable global initiative founded in South Africa called Unashamedly Ethical: https://unashamedlyethical.com/. This organization has rallied more than 5000 business and other leaders across the globe to a campaign for ethics, values, and clean living. They urge absolute transparency and honesty in contracting and other business relationships.
2. Creatively employ an asset-based development model with those who regularly demand bribes:
    a. **Example**: Extortionists demand money to protect a successful business, with the implied threat that they will destroy the business if they're not regularly paid.
    b. **Hypothetical response**: "I'm so very glad to see you! I have been waiting for you, and in fact I have been praying for you. May I offer you and your colleagues a better proposal, one that will restore your honor in the society while also putting you on the path to legitimate employment so that your families can be healthy and prosperous? There will be some conditions, such as the willingness to work hard, but I have no doubt that you and many of your colleagues will relish this proposal. I want

to employ several of your people in my business, but they must be hard workers who do their very best in order to come onto my payroll. So, I propose that you ask your colleagues to enter a competition to discover which two of them can produce the finest product (or service). I'll then hire those two and pay them a fine salary. Since the Bible teaches that tithing is an appropriate way to share wealth, they can distribute 10% of their earnings with the rest of the group. If they do a fine job and our business grows, then we will want to hire more of your people. Not only that, I want you and your colleagues to be trained in business development so that you learn what God says about business development. I'll train your people in biblical principles of healthy business development, and then you'll join us on a team of business educators who will train the rest of your people how to start successful businesses that make their families prosperous and very honorable. You, of course, will have the greatest honor, because through you they will learn this valuable education. Everything we do, as I'm sure you can imagine, will involve seeking to please God. Shall we pray about this idea together? Why don't we meet tomorrow and begin to implement this plan? I'll look forward to working with you so that you not only gain great esteem as a creative leader but also your families will start to flourish through hard work."

3. Form accountability groups for businesspersons who face demands to participate in corrupt activities.

4. Teach businesspeople to ask these questions when asked for special payments:
   a. Is it lawful?
   b. Is the deal transparent to all parties?
   c. Does the action reflect the Golden Rule: Do unto others, as you would have them do to you?
   d. Does anyone involved feel uncomfortable about what is proposed?

Leadership

Leadership everywhere can be a challenge. So few people recognize leadership as the responsibility it is. Instead, they're tempted to enjoy the power it can provide and the personal gain it can bring. Church leaders have an opportunity to lay a good foundation in church during Bible classes and sermon time. While in Africa, I engaged many people in political positions at every level of government and found them incredibly open to discussing the connection between personal integrity and political success. I also pointed out how they were in great positions to make their country a great place to live by honoring God in their work. Unfortunately, these people are also in position to cause a great deal of pain and suffering to those in the lower levels of society economically and socially. These people can be either great allies or great enemies. Fortunately, most of them are critical thinkers, which is how they rose to where they are. This also makes them open to reason, which could bring many to faith who aren't believers.

1. Preach and teach Exodus 18:21 as the standard for church and public leadership.
2. Encourage religious leaders to meet with government officials and ask them to end institutionalized corruption.
3. Advocate for legal compensation increases for government officials, accompanied by an increase in taxes to pay for this. This should be accompanied by the employment of a government financial manager who can manage cash flow so that government employees are paid on time. (Bribery must be described as informal taxation.)
4. Create annual awards for the least corrupt public officials, including legislators and bureaucrats, as well as specific offices. This requires an excellent investigative process.
5. Consider whistleblower awards.
6. Explore, as a model, the Malaysian-based anticorruption initiative Oriental Hearts and Mind Study Institute, which sponsored the 7th National Congress on Integrity in September 2014.

Media

The media has great influence, as we have seen recently in the USA. Many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa are open to some freedom of the press, but there has also been some persecution of reporters who print or report things that may reflect negatively on the government. Privately owned radio and TV stations could be used to educate and encourage. Education on the effects of corruption would probably be a useful tool that would be widely accepted rather than directly pointing fingers at individuals. The presentation of hope will be well received by all and less threatening to those who participate in corruption.

1. Develop YouTube videos of actual acts of corruption.
2. Develop plays and other artistic media that highlight the tragedy of corruption.
    a. What about a creative adaptation of Jesus' cleansing the Jewish temple as a story about Jesus driving out the bribe-takers and corrupt officials?
    b. Create humorous skits that ridicule the corruption culture and the practices that sustain it.
    c. Create "bribing stations," that is, officially designated centers, or buildings where all bribes must occur (as a means of shaming both bribe givers and takers).
3. Create smartphone apps:
    a. To record and promote videos of actual corruption.
    b. To host a library of anti-corruption lessons that can be shown to adults and children.
    c. To list all the anti-corruption references in the Bible, along with short commentary.

Education

I won't repeat the observations and thoughts I expressed in the section on students when talking about formal education in the school system. At the same time, I truly believe that if people can be helped to understand the foundational issues that cause many of the challenges that plague their daily lives, it will help them focus their efforts in addressing them. It would also be advisable to educate those who are anxious to help relieve the burden of poverty and fight against corruption so that their efforts will also be effective.

1. Develop K-12 curricula that teach about citizen rights and laws regarding corruption.
2. Create parent education program in which parents are taught new nursery rhymes, stories, and parables that promote integrity.
3. Devise evangelistic preaching and appeals that are attuned to the phenomenon of corruption, including a "Four Spiritual Laws for Those in Corrupt Societies."
4. Develop civil society-based monitoring and research organizations to raise public consciousness of the problem.
5. Develop appropriate advertising strategies that involve traditional advertising venues, such as billboards, TV ads, etc.
6. Conduct fortnightly public roundtables where citizens report their experiences with corruption and bribery.
7. Seek research funding to understand the many cultural, institutional, and structural variables that contribute to the culture of corruption.
8. Create support groups for those who are berated and attacked on the job for their resistance to corruption.
9. Invite academic researchers to study the common ways that people participate in corruption: evading taxes, paying bribes, extorting others, etc.

Legal

I shared a few stories of legal cases and defenses we were able to help provide for those wrongly accused and those who would never see prosecution had we not intervened. I met judges, lawyers, state counsels (prosecutors), police inspectors, and gendarmes (state police) during the course of those experiences. I took every opportunity to engage as many as possible in conversation. Some expressed great interest, and some laughed at me. In one particular case I had a judge tell me how he was trustworthy and involved in different social justice programs; then I saw him enter and leave a place where he could only be taking a bribe. I can't repeat too often how corruption is extremely profitable. For this reason, it's a powerful force to overcome. God is a God of justice, and for this reason His people should be people who always seek justice. In the book of James, Chapter 1: verse 26, and through the second chapter, James tells us that God has no interest in empty religious practices, that His people who want to honor Him must show no partiality and treat all people equally and fairly, that they should love their neighbor as themselves. The legal system is used all over the world to protect criminals and rob the poor. It's a place where lots of money changes hands and is, therefore, a tough place for a person of integrity to work. Strength in numbers is critical, and this is one of the greatest opportunities to produce hope for the hopeless. It's also one of the elements that is critical to successful development, because investors must feel safe from corruption if they're going to invest in a society's economy.

1. Use grand juries to develop cases against corruption.
2. Capitalize upon existing Christian justice initiatives (e.g., International Justice Mission) that could be invited to enlarge their arenas of operation to include bribery, corruption, and extortion.

International

1. Many opportunities exist for engagement with likeminded people all over the world. There's much that can be learned from the work and experiences of others around the world that can shorten learning curves, which can then speed up progress. This can also provide confidence in those starting out to see that others have had success in their own endeavors. Nevertheless, in the end, local success must be achieved by the local people. Creating a sustained international network of anti-corruption campaigners is one way to facilitate this.Create an international protection fund to help those who need refuge and protection when they expose corruption.
2. Promote and create educational materials around the United Nations Declaration against Corruption and Bribery in International Commercial Transactions: http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/51/a51r191.htm
3. Promote current international campaigns against corruption:
   a. UNODC's Action against Corruption and Economic Crime: https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/corruption/
   b. I Paid a Bribe.com: An Indian-based website that invites people to report bribes demanded and those paid: www.Ipaidabribe.com
   c. Others

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Solving *the* Puzzle *of* Development

STUDY GUIDE

Faithful Presence *for* Redemptive Influence

A Study Guide
for Whole-Life Transformation
and Societal Change

This study guide was created through a collaborative effort

between myself and Microsoft Copilot,

combining human insight with AI support

to make the material clearer and more engaging.

THOM SCHOTANUS

How to Use This Study Guide

Purpose and Vision

This study guide is designed to equip believers to live faithfully and redemptively in every sphere of life. It challenges the divide between sacred and secular, calling Christians to embody integrity, justice, and hope in their workplaces, communities, and public institutions.

Drawing from biblical foundations, historical models like the Clapham Sect, and contemporary frameworks such as the 1234 Model, this guide helps readers diagnose cultural challenges and respond with spiritual capital—truth, grace, and strategic action.

What This Guide Offers

Modular Learning: Each section of the book is followed by a study module that deepens understanding and invites practical engagement.

VISUAL METAPHORS: Puzzle, bridge, and toolbox imagery help clarify complex ideas and make them actionable.

SCRIPTURAL GROUNDING: Every module is rooted in key biblical passages that shape worldview and discipleship.

PRACTICAL TOOLS: From Integrity Groups to Worldview Mapping, readers are equipped to apply their faith in real-world contexts.

COLLABORATIVE DESIGN: The guide is structured for use in small groups, leadership cohorts, and personal study—with grayscale-ready formatting and style tags for easy adaptation.

Intended Outcomes

By the end of this guide, readers will be able to:

- Diagnose cultural and systemic challenges through a biblical lens.
- Integrate faith and work as part of their calling and witness.
- Build spiritual capital in their spheres of influence.
- Engage culture with discernment, creativity, and courage.
- Form communities of practice that sustain redemptive presence over time.

Who This Is For

This guide is for believers who long to see their faith shape the world—not just their Sunday mornings. It's for pastors, professionals, artists, educators, and everyday disciples who want to live with integrity and influence. It's for those who believe that transformation begins with truth, but must be carried forward through love, wisdom, and action.

MODULE | The "Why" Behind Development—Values, Calling, and the Transformation of Hearts and Minds. [Pages 4 – 9]

Grounding Scripture

Micah 6:8 *"He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?"* This passage captures the heart of godly development: not merely external aid, but internal transformation rooted in justice, mercy, and humility. It frames the author's journey from personal calling to systemic insight.

Puzzle Piece

INSIGHT: Why do societies rich in resources remain underdeveloped? Why do well-intentioned efforts often fail to produce lasting change? This piece introduces the central puzzle: development is not just technical—it's moral, spiritual, and deeply human.

Toolbox | Practical Tools

What "why" questions have shaped your own journey?

- Reframe Development: Begin to see development as a byproduct of values, not merely infrastructure.
- Discern Priorities: Consider how your own life priorities align with God's call to justice and mercy.
- Engage Thoughtfully: Explore one book from the author's list and note how it reframes your understanding of mission or development.

Bridge Thought | Connection

From personal obedience to public impact:

- The author's story models how individual integrity and spiritual clarity can lead to systemic insight and redemptive engagement.
- How might your own story become a bridge between faith and societal transformation?

Reflection Prompts

1. What stood out to you in the author's journey of calling and questioning?
2. How does the idea that "development is a product of values" challenge or affirm your assumptions?
3. What does Micah 6:8 suggest about the kind of people God uses to bring lasting change?

Action Steps

- This week, identify one area in your life where your values are being tested by competing priorities.
- Ask: What does it look like to walk humbly, do justice, and love mercy in this area?
- Journal your reflections and share one insight with your group.

MODULE | The Premise for the Book

Gospel-Centered Development [Pages 12 – 14]

Grounding Scripture

Romans 1:16 | *The Gospel as the power of God for salvation.*
Matthew 28:18–20 | *The Great Commission as the central mission.*
Genesis 1:27 | *All people created in God's image.*
Proverbs 31:8–9 | *Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves.*

Key Themes & Metaphors

Puzzle Piece: Development is not just about resources—it's about fitting the right pieces together: faith, values, leadership, and local agency.

BridgeThought | Connection: Empathy builds bridges across cultures; pity builds walls.

Toolbox| Practical Tools: Sustainable change requires equipping local disciple-makers with tools—not just delivering aid.

Reflection Prompts

1. Gospel First: How does the Gospel shape our understanding of development and human flourishing?
2. Empathy vs. Pity: What does it look like to extend a "hand up" rather than a "hand out" in your context?
3. Untapped Potential: In what ways can non-clergy believers become catalysts for transformation in their communities?
4. Cultural Complexity: What barriers—political, moral, or spiritual—must be addressed to enable sustainable change?

Action Steps

- Identify one local disciple-maker and explore how to support their growth and influence.
- Reflect on your own church's approach to missions: is it more relief-oriented or empowerment-driven?
- Think about how your strengths and skills can help share Jesus in culturally relevant ways.

MODULE | Ministry and Work [Pages 15 – 21]

Theme: *Work is not separate from ministry—*
it is a primary context for discipleship, redemptive influence, and spiritual capital.
Every believer is called to glorify God through their vocation.

Grounding Scripture

Colossians 3:23–24 | *"Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord…"*
Genesis 2:15 | *"The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden… to work it and keep it."*
Ephesians 4:28 | *"…let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands…"*
1 Thessalonians 4:11–12 | *"…work with your hands… so that you may walk properly before outsiders…"*

Puzzle Piece

INSIGHT: Many believers compartmentalize faith and work—seeing ministry as church-based and work as secular.But Scripture reveals work as a divine assignment, a place to reflect God's image and resist corruption. This piece is vocational: how do we reclaim work as worship and witness?

CHALLENGE: When believers disconnect their faith from their profession, spiritual capital is lost. Corruption thrives when Christians remain silent or passive in the workplace.

Bridge Thought | Connection

- The idea of a bridge from sacred to secular is false.
- Whole-life discipleship equips believers to live redemptively in every domain—including business, education, government, and trades.

Toolbox | Practical Tools

Vocational Discipleship Framework: Teach believers to see their work as ministry.

Integrity Group Integration: Form workplace-based groups for support, accountability, and witness.

Spiritual Capital Tracker: Help believers identify how their work builds or erodes trust, justice, and dignity.

Reflection Prompts

1. How does your work reflect God's character—productivity, responsibility, creativity?
2. Where have you felt tension between your faith and your profession?
3. What would it look like to treat your job as a mission field?

Action Steps

- Equip believers to live visibly and courageously in their workplace.
- Form Integrity Groups within sectors—business, education, healthcare, government.
- Teach churches to affirm and commission believers for ministry in the marketplace.

MODULE | Culture and Worldview Impacts on Society [Pages 21 – 26]

Theme: *Every society is shaped by underlying beliefs—its worldview. These beliefs influence laws, education, media, economics, and ethics. Discipleship must engage culture at the level of worldview to bring lasting transformation.*

Grounding Scripture

Romans 12:2 | *"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind…"*

Acts 17:22–31 | Paul engages the Athenian worldview with truth and grace.

Proverbs 4:23 | *"Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life Proverbs."*

Puzzle Piece

INSIGHT: Culture is not neutral—it's a carrier of worldview.

THE PUZZLE IS DIAGNOSTIC: What beliefs are shaping society's systems, and how do they align or conflict with biblical truth?

CHALLENGE: When believers fail to engage worldview, they may accept cultural norms without question or retreat from public life. This leads to erosion of spiritual capital and societal crumbling.

Bridge Thought | Connection

- The bridge between faith and culture must be built with discernment.
- Believers are called to be salt and light—not by withdrawal, but by wise engagement.

Toolbox | Practical Tools

Worldview Mapping: Teach believers to identify the dominant worldview in media, education, and policy.

Cultural Discernment Framework: Equip believers to evaluate cultural trends through a biblical lens.

Redemptive Engagement Model: Discuss ways to respond with truth, grace, and strategic influence.

Reflection Prompts

1. What cultural messages are shaping your community's values?
2. Where do you see conflict between biblical truth and societal norms?
3. How can you engage culture without compromise?

Action Steps

- Train believers to analyze worldview in their spheres of influence.
- Create forums for public theology and cultural engagement.
- Encourage creative expression—art, writing, media—that reflects truth and beauty.

MODULE | Language Challenges [Pages 26 – 29]

Theme: *How cultural "operating systems" shape interpretation, communication, and discipleship.*

Grounding Scripture

1 Corinthians 9:22 – *"I have become all things to all people so that by all means I might save some."*

Proverbs 18:13 – *"If one gives an answer before he hears, it is his folly and shame."*

Acts 2:6–8 – The miracle of understanding across languages at Pentecost.

Puzzle Piece

INSIGHT: Cultural values function like operating systems—shaping how people receive, interpret, and respond to information. Even shared language can mask deep differences in meaning.

CHALLENGE: Without cultural translation, biblical truth may be misinterpreted or rejected—not due to rebellion, but misalignment of "software."

Bridge Thought | Connection

- Effective cross-cultural discipleship requires more than linguistic translation—it demands worldview translation. Like applying a "patch" to our own operating system, we must adjust our assumptions to align with Christ's values and the listener's context.

Toolbox | Practical Tools

Explore Cultural Expressions: Identify key biblical idioms and explore how they might be misunderstood in different cultural "OS."

Vocabulary Audit: Before teaching, assess whether your examples and terms exist in the listener's world.

Graceful Inquiry: Build environments where learners feel safe to ask "What does that mean?" without shame.

Reflection Prompts

1. When have you misunderstood someone due to cultural or linguistic assumptions?
2. What "patches" has God applied to your operating system through sanctification?
3. How can you better listen for the "unspoken confusion" in cross-cultural settings?

Action Steps

- Review your teaching materials for culturally dependent idioms or examples.
- Practice explaining biblical concepts using metaphors from the listener's context.
- Invite feedback from nationals on what's clear and what's confusing.

MODULE | Opposing Cultural Values—*Religion* [Pages 32 – 34]

Theme: *How theological framing of wealth and poverty shapes societal development and discipleship.*

Grounding Scripture

Ecclesiastes 5:10 – *"He who loves money will not be satisfied with money… this also is vanity."*

Hebrews 13:5 – *"Keep your life free from love of money… I will never leave you nor forsake you."*

2 Corinthians 9:8 – *"God is able to bless you abundantly… so that you may abound in every good work."*

Puzzle Piece

INSIGHT: Religious values around wealth and poverty deeply influence cultural attitudes toward development, generosity, and responsibility. Some traditions exalt poverty as spiritual virtue; others treat wealth as divine favor. Both can distort biblical truth.

CHALLENGE: When theology is shaped by cultural assumptions—whether prosperity-driven or poverty-glorifying—it can hinder sustainable development and misrepresent God's character.

Bridge Thought | Connection

- A biblical view of wealth sees it as a resource for generosity and mission—not a measure of righteousness or shame.
- Churches empowered to give, support pastors, and send missionaries reflect a theology of stewardship and dignity.

Toolbox | Practical Tools

Theology Audit: Compare cultural views of wealth with biblical teaching on stewardship, generosity, and contentment.

Narrative Shift: Share stories of churches funding their own ministries to reframe expectations.

Empowerment Lens: Evaluate development projects through the lens of dignity, ownership, and long-term impact.

Reflection Prompts

1. How has your culture shaped your view of wealth and poverty?
2. What biblical truths challenge or affirm those views?
3. In what ways can generosity become a form of discipleship?

Action Steps

- Teach stewardship as part of church strengthening—not just spiritual growth.
- Highlight examples of national churches funding their own outreach.
- Reframe development work to promote dignity and local ownership.

MODULE | Opposing Cultural Values—
Trust in the Individual [Pages 34 – 37]

Theme: *How trust and integrity shape discipleship, development, and relational influence.*

Grounding Scripture

Colossians 3:9–10 – *"Do not lie to one another… put on the new self, which is being renewed…"*

2 Corinthians 8:21 – *"We aim at what is honorable not only in the Lord's sight but also in the sight of man."*

Proverbs 11:3 – *"The integrity of the upright guides them…"*

Puzzle Piece

INSIGHT: Trust is fragile, slow-growing, and foundational. In cultures where distrust is the norm, development and discipleship are stunted. Distrust of individuals leads to excessive oversight, suspicion, and relational breakdown—even in Christian institutions.

CHALLENGE: When Christians are not known for integrity, the gospel loses credibility. Trust must be earned and embodied before it can be taught.

Bridge Thought | Connection

- Trustworthiness is one of the first fruits of transformation. It's the foundation for discipleship, leadership, and sustainable influence.
- In cultures where jealousy and sabotage undermine progress, believers must model mutual encouragement and transparent integrity.

Toolbox | Practical Tools

Trust Audit: Identify areas where distrust hinders ministry or development.

Integrity Stories: Share testimonies of trust earned through consistent character.

Encouragement Culture: Create environments where growth is celebrated, not sabotaged.

Reflection Prompts

1. When have you experienced distrust in ministry or leadership?
2. How does your culture view individual success—celebrated or resented?
3. What habits build trust in your relationships and community?

Action Steps

- Teach trustworthiness as a core discipleship value.
- Model integrity in financial dealings, promises, and leadership.
- Celebrate others' growth and success publicly to shift cultural norms.

MODULE | Opposing Cultural Values—
The Moral Imperative [Pages 37 – 40]

Theme: *How alignment between law and behavior reflects spiritual transformation and societal health.*

Grounding Scripture

1 Peter 2:13–17 – *"Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution…"*
Romans 13:1–5 – *"Let every person be subject to the governing authorities…"*
Philippians 2:6–8 – Christ's humility and obedience, even unto death.

Puzzle Piece

INSIGHT: In cultures where laws are routinely bent by the powerful, societal trust erodes and development stalls. When Christians demand exceptions rather than model submission, they undermine both witness and justice.

CHALLENGE: A moral culture requires more than good laws—it demands consistent, humble obedience. Transformation is visible when believers uphold order, even when inconvenient.

Bridge Thought | Connection

- Christ's example of submission—even with divine authority—calls believers to live under human institutions with integrity.
- When Christians in leadership model obedience, they elevate the moral tone of society and strengthen the church's credibility.

Toolbox | Practical Tools

Policy Integrity: Uphold rules that serve the common good, even when pressured to bend them.

Influence Audit: Identify areas where Christian leaders can model transformation through obedience.

Cultural Reset: Reframe "importance" not as privilege, but as responsibility to serve.

Reflection Prompts

1. When have you seen rules bent for the powerful? What was the impact?
2. How does your culture define "importance"? How does Scripture challenge that view?
3. What policies in your context need defending for the sake of justice?

Action Steps

- Teach submission to authority as a spiritual discipline.
- Celebrate leaders who model integrity over privilege.
- Protect policies that promote equity, even when unpopular.

MODULE | Opposing Cultural Values—
Views of Competition [Pages 41 – 43]

Theme: *How competition, creativity, and corruption shape economic development and discipleship.*

Grounding Scripture

1 Corinthians 9:24 – *"Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it."*

Colossians 3:23 – *"Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men…"*

Puzzle Piece

INSIGHT: Healthy competition fosters excellence, innovation, and economic growth. But when corruption distorts opportunity, competition becomes a source of injustice and despair. In cultures where bribery and favoritism dominate, gifted individuals are sidelined, and creativity is stifled.
CHALLENGE: Without integrity and opportunity, competition becomes exploitation. Discipleship must address both personal character and systemic barriers.

Bridge Thought | Connection

- Biblical competition is not about defeating others—it's about wholehearted effort, stewardship, and honoring God through excellence.
- When believers model integrity and creativity, they redeem broken systems and inspire others to pursue their calling.

Toolbox | Practical Tools

Corruption Audit: Identify where bribery or favoritism undermines opportunity.
Creativity Catalyst: Encourage critical thinking and innovation in discipleship and education.
Excellence Culture: Celebrate effort, integrity, and results—not just status or connections.

Reflection Prompts

1. How does your culture view competition—healthy or harmful?
2. What barriers prevent gifted individuals from thriving?
3. How can discipleship promote creativity and integrity?

Action Steps

- Teach biblical excellence as a form of worship.
- Challenge corrupt systems with truth and transparency.
- Support initiatives that foster innovation and fair opportunity.

MODULE | Opposing Cultural Values—
Notions of Justice [Pages 43 – 47]

Theme: *How justice systems reflect moral capital and shape societal development.*

Grounding Scripture

Deuteronomy 16:18–20 – *"You shall not pervert justice… Justice, and only justice, you shall follow…"*

Acts 10:34 – *"Truly I understand that God shows no partiality…"*

Psalm 106:3 – *"Blessed are they who observe justice, who do righteousness at all times!"*

Puzzle Piece

INSIGHT: When justice is reserved for the wealthy or powerful, the poor lose hope and society loses integrity. Corruption in courts and law enforcement erodes trust, stifles development, and silences the vulnerable.

CHALLENGE: A society cannot flourish when injustice is normalized. Discipleship must include advocacy, integrity, and a biblical vision of justice.

Bridge Thought | Connection

- God's justice is impartial, righteous, and protective of the vulnerable.
- Believers in positions of influence must embody this justice—not just preach it—to restore credibility and catalyze change.

Toolbox | Practical Tools

Integrity Groups: Form networks of professionals committed to godly influence and mutual support.

Advocacy Lens: Equip believers to stand with the voiceless and challenge unjust systems.

Justice Audit: Identify where partiality or bribery undermines biblical values.

Reflection Prompts

1. When have you witnessed injustice? What did it cost the victim?
2. How does your culture define fairness—and how does Scripture challenge that view?
3. What would it look like for believers to be known as defenders of justice?

Action Steps

- Teach justice as a core discipleship theme, not just a legal concept.
- Support believers in law, business, and government to live out biblical integrity.
- Encourage formation of Integrity Groups to foster courage and accountability.

MODULE | The Lesser Virtues—
Hidden Pillars of Transformation [Pages 47 – 48]

Theme Summary: *This section explores how "lesser virtues"—like punctuality, courtesy, and order—reflect deeper values and shape societal development. While often overlooked, these daily behaviors reveal whether a culture prioritizes self-interest or mutual respect. The contrast between development-favorable and development-resistant cultures is illustrated through vivid examples from Sub-Saharan Africa, highlighting both challenges and redemptive possibilities.*

Grounding Scriptures

2 Peter 1:5–7 – A progression from faith to love, built on virtue, knowledge, and self-control.

Colossians 3:12 – A call to embody compassion, humility, meekness, and patience.

1 Corinthians 13:13 – Faith, hope, and love as enduring theological virtues.

These passages affirm that lesser virtues are not peripheral—they're fruit of spiritual formation and essential to public witness.

Puzzle Piece

INSIGHT: Each lesser virtue is a puzzle piece—small on its own, but essential to the full picture of societal health. Without courtesy, punctuality, or order, the image of a just and flourishing community remains incomplete.

Bridge Thought | Connection

• Lesser virtues form the planks of the bridge between personal faith and public impact. They allow individuals to cross from belief to behavior, and from self-interest to shared dignity.

Toolbox | Practical Tools

These virtues are tools for cultural repair. Humility is a level, courtesy a measuring tape, punctuality a clock—each helping build trust, equity, and efficiency in daily life.

Reflection Questions

1. Which "lesser virtue" do you most struggle to embody consistently?
2. How do small acts of courtesy or punctuality reflect deeper spiritual maturity?
3. Where have you seen cultural resistance to these virtues—and what redemptive responses are possible?

Action Steps

- Practice punctuality this week as a spiritual discipline.
- Model courtesy in public spaces, especially where chaos or impatience reign.
- Affirm others who embody these virtues, reinforcing their value in your community.

MODULE | Opposing Cultural Values—*Views of Authority* [Pages 49 – 52]

Theme: *How cultural attitudes toward authority shape leadership, accountability, and societal transformation.*

Grounding Scripture

Romans 13:1–2 – *"Let every person be subject to the governing authorities… those that exist have been instituted by God."*

Matthew 20:25–28 – *"Whoever would be great among you must be your servant…"*

Proverbs 29:2 – *"When the righteous increase, the people rejoice, but when the wicked rule, the people groan."*

Puzzle Piece

INSIGHT: Authority is a structural piece in every society—but how it's used determines whether it builds or breaks. In development-resistant cultures, authority is often wielded for personal gain, not public good.
CHALLENGE: When leaders demand privilege instead of modeling service, they erode trust and hinder transformation.

Bridge Thought | Connection

- Biblical authority is servant-hearted. It builds bridges between power and responsibility, between leaders and the led.
- Christ redefined greatness through humility and sacrificial leadership.

Toolbox | Practical Tools

Leadership Audit: Evaluate whether authority is used to serve or to dominate.
Servant Leadership Training: Equip leaders to model Christlike influence.
Accountability Structures: Build systems that reward integrity and correct abuse.

Reflection Prompts

1. How is authority viewed in your culture—earned, inherited, or demanded?
2. What examples of servant leadership have you seen in action?
3. How can believers in authority positions reflect Christ's model?

Action Steps

- Teach servant leadership as a biblical norm, not an exception.
- Support leaders who model humility and accountability.
- Challenge cultural norms that equate power with privilege.

Module | Opposing Cultural Values—*View of Life and the Future* [Pages 52 – 56]

Theme: *How cultural perspectives on life and the future shape hope, agency, and ethical behavior.*

Grounding Scripture

Jeremiah 29:11 – *"For I know the plans I have for you… to give you a future and a hope."*
John 15:1–5 – *"Abide in me, and I in you… apart from me you can do nothing."*
Matthew 6:33 – *"Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."*

Puzzle Piece

INSIGHT: This value comparison centers on hope. Development-resistant cultures often view life as something that happens to them—fatalistic, resigned, and reactive. Development-favoring cultures see life as something to engage—creative, proactive, and full of possibility.
CHALLENGE: Fatalism undermines personal agency and ethical decision-making. Without hope, people may resort to corruption or resignation, believing change is impossible.

Bridge Thought | Connection

- Biblical hope is rooted in God's promises and our abiding relationship with Him.
- It bridges despair and purpose, inviting believers to live with expectancy and integrity—even in hardship.

Toolbox | Practical Tools

Integrity Groups: Restore hope and accountability from the top down.
Worldview Training: Teach biblical agency and responsibility.
Economic Mindset Shift: Encourage creative productivity over zero-sum thinking.

Reflection Prompts

1. How does your culture view the future—fixed or flexible?
2. What role does personal choice play in shaping outcomes?
3. How can biblical hope reshape economic and ethical behavior?

Action Steps

- Equip believers to live visibly godly lives in the marketplace.
- Challenge fatalistic language with truth about God's provision and human agency.
- Promote creative, ethical enterprise as a form of redemptive influence.

Module | Understanding the African Traditional Religious Worldview [Pages 56 – 61]

Theme: *How traditional beliefs shape theology, spiritual practice, and vulnerability to distorted teaching.*

Grounding Scripture

John 14:6 – *"I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."*

1 Timothy 2:5 – *"For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus."*

Colossians 2:8 – *"See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy…"*

Puzzle Piece

INSIGHT: The African Traditional Worldview includes a layered spiritual system—God as distant, with blessings mediated through spirits and intermediaries. This framework influences how illness, misfortune, and spiritual power are interpreted, and it often carries over into Christian practice.

CHALLENGE: When cultural beliefs about spiritual mediation are imported into Christianity, they distort the Gospel—replacing Christ with prophets or spiritual figures who "unlock" blessings.

Bridge Thought | Connection

- True biblical faith bridges the gap between God and humanity through Christ alone.
- Discipleship must help believers cross from cultural syncretism to theological clarity—affirming direct access to God through Jesus.

Toolbox | Practical Tools

Worldview Mapping: Identify where traditional beliefs overlap or conflict with biblical theology.

Teaching Moments: Use prosperity-focused posts or practices as entry points for deeper discipleship.

Leadership Development: Prioritize equipping national leaders who can teach within cultural context.

Reflection Prompts

1. What aspects of traditional worldview still influence your understanding of God?
2. How does Scripture challenge the idea of spiritual intermediaries?
3. What does it mean to have direct access to God through Christ?

Action Steps

- Teach the uniqueness of Christ as mediator in culturally relevant ways.
- Affirm believers who reject syncretism and pursue biblical faith.
- Equip national leaders to disciple others with theological clarity and cultural sensitivity.

MODULE | Cross-Cultural Points to Ponder [Pages 62 – 63]

Theme: *Why national leaders are essential for lasting impact—and how cultural barriers shape discipleship.*

Grounding Scripture

1 Corinthians 9:22 – *"I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some."*

2 Timothy 2:2 – *"Entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others."*

Proverbs 4:7 – *"Wisdom is supreme; therefore get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding."*

Puzzle Piece

INSIGHT: Expatriates often face cultural resistance when teaching across divides. Even sound biblical teaching may be dismissed with "You don't understand—you're not from here."

This is compounded by educational systems that emphasize memorization over critical thinking, leading to theological knowledge without life application.

CHALLENGE: Without discernment and contextual wisdom, biblical teaching can be reduced to religious programming. This promotes works-based faith and stunts spiritual growth.

Bridge Thought | Connection

- National leaders can cross the cultural bridge more effectively. They speak the heart-language of their people and embody the gospel in context.
- Discipleship must prioritize equipping these leaders—not just with knowledge, but with wisdom and critical thinking.

Toolbox | Practical Tools

Leader Identification: Target those with cognitive and critical thinking gifts for deeper discipleship.

Contextual Training: Move beyond rote learning to real-life application.

Expat Awareness: Prepare expatriates to teach with humility, listening first and partnering with nationals.

Reflection Prompts

1. Have you ever experienced cultural resistance to biblical truth?
2. What's the difference between memorized theology and lived theology?
3. How can you identify and equip leaders who think critically and apply Scripture wisely?

Action Steps

- Invest in national leaders with contextual insight and spiritual maturity.
- Shift teaching models from information transfer to transformation.
- Encourage expatriates to serve as catalysts, not primary voices.

MODULE | Christian Culture and Economic Development [Pages 63 – 65]

Theme: *Cultures aren't meant to be replaced—they're meant to be redeemed through biblical values.*

Grounding Scripture

Romans 12:2 – "*Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind…"*

Micah 6:8 – *"What does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."*

Matthew 5:16 – *"Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."*

Puzzle Piece

INSIGHT: There's no such thing as a purely "Christian culture"—only cultures transformed by Christian values. Short-term missions often reduce culture to surface-level traits, missing the deeper systems of meaning and behavior. Without understanding cultural complexity, ministry efforts risk being ineffective or even harmful.

CHALLENGE: Trying to "change their culture" often reflects a lack of understanding. Instead, we must help people reflect Christ in their own culture—allowing the Holy Spirit to transform what doesn't align with God's values.

Bridge Thought | Connection

- The bridge isn't from one culture to another—it's from fallen humanity to Christlikeness.
- As believers grow in faith, their culture begins to reflect biblical values in ways that are locally meaningful and sustainable.

Toolbox | Practical Tools

Cultural Humility: Teach with awareness of idioms, assumptions, and local meaning systems.

Transformational Discipleship: Focus on heart-level change, not behavior modification.

Systems Thinking: Recognize how moral-cultural values shape political and economic health.

Reflection Prompts

1. What assumptions do you carry about what "Christian culture" looks like?
2. How can you honor cultural complexity while still teaching biblical truth?
3. What does it mean to reflect Christ in your own cultural context?

Action Steps

- Equip believers to apply Scripture in culturally relevant ways.
- Avoid exporting methods—focus on cultivating values.
- Teach how moral-cultural transformation supports societal flourishing.

MODULE | Which Basis for Morality? [Pages 65 – 67]

Theme: *Sustainable economies require moral foundations—and only one source has lasting power.*

Grounding Scripture

Proverbs 11:3 – *"The integrity of the upright guides them, but the unfaithful are destroyed by their duplicity."*

Psalm 24:1–2 – *"The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it… for he founded it on the seas and established it on the waters."*

Micah 6:8 – *"To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."*

Puzzle Piece

INSIGHT: Business can operate from three moral positions:

- Immorality – illegal and destructive (e.g., trafficking, fraud)
- Amorality – legal but ethically indifferent (e.g., profit over people)
- Morality – guided by integrity, service, and trust

CHALLENGE: Capitalism without morality becomes exploitative. But morality itself must be grounded—either in self-interest, secular ethics, or divine authority. Only the Judeo-Christian moral framework offers both heart transformation and lasting accountability.

Bridge Thought | Connection

- The bridge to a flourishing economy isn't just policy—it's people shaped by moral conviction.
- Biblical morality transforms not just behavior, but motivation and culture.

Toolbox | Practical Tools

Business Discipleship: Teach biblical values in economic contexts.
Ethics Training: Contrast self-interest vs. divine accountability.
Cultural Engagement: Equip believers to challenge amoral norms with gospel integrity.

Reflection Prompts

1. Where do you see immorality or amorality in your economic context?
2. What motivates your ethical decisions—law, gain, or God's authority?
3. How can biblical morality shape business and societal health?

Action Steps

- Promote business models rooted in biblical values.
- Equip leaders to disciple others in economic integrity.
- Advocate for systems that reward moral behavior, not just legal compliance.

MODULE | Understanding the Education System [Pages 67 – 68]

Theme: *From memorization to transformation—why teaching styles matter for societal and spiritual growth.*

Puzzle Piece

INSIGHT: In many underdeveloped societies, learning is practical and memorization-based—"If you do it like this, it works." Formal education often mirrors this style, especially in rural areas, where theory and critical thinking are absent. This limits creativity, problem-solving, and theological depth.

CHALLENGE: When creative teaching is introduced, it's often rejected with "You don't understand—you're not from here." Without reform, schools risk perpetuating shallow learning and works-based religion.

Bridge Thought | Connection

- The bridge to transformation is not just access to education, but a shift in how learning happens.
- Discipleship must move from rote memorization to wisdom, discernment, and life application.

Toolbox | Practical Tools

School Committees: Build shared ownership and accountability for school policies.

Creative Teaching Models: Introduce theory and application gradually, with cultural sensitivity.

Leader Development: Target educators and thinkers who can model transformative learning.

Reflection Prompts

1. How does your culture shape the way you learn and teach?
2. What are the risks of memorization without understanding?
3. How can discipleship foster critical thinking and spiritual maturity?

Action Steps

- Support schools that prioritize wisdom and application.
- Equip educators to teach beyond exams—toward life transformation.
- Disciple leaders who can challenge cultural norms with grace and clarity.

MODULE | Gathering Statistics [Pages 68 – 69]

Theme: *What school data reveals about society—and why cognitive gifts must be stewarded for transformation.*

Grounding Scripture

Proverbs 18:15 – *"The heart of the discerning acquires knowledge; the ears of the wise seek it out."*

Matthew 25:14–30 – Parable of the talents: stewardship of gifts and responsibility.

1 Corinthians 12:4–7 – *"There are different kinds of gifts… but the same Spirit distributes them."*

Puzzle Piece

INSIGHT: Years of exam data revealed a consistent bell curve: a few high performers, a narrow mid-band majority, and a few low scorers. This pattern wasn't just academic—it reflected society itself. Those with cognitive gifts (critical thinking, common sense) had a distinct advantage in life.

CHALLENGE: Teachers often saw the school's purpose as job creation, not education. This mindset, combined with rote learning and lack of accountability, perpetuated mediocrity. True transformation requires both order and vision—plus stewardship of gifted individuals.

Bridge Thought | Connection

- The bridge to societal change begins with recognizing and equipping those with cognitive gifts.
- They are potential leaders, problem-solvers, and culture-shapers—if discipled well.

Toolbox | Practical Tools

Data Analysis: Use school performance to identify gifted students early.

Vision Casting: Reframe education as a tool for societal transformation.

Gift Stewardship: Disciple high-capacity individuals for leadership and service.

Reflection Prompts

1. What does the bell curve reveal about your community or context?
2. How can you identify and invest in those with cognitive gifts?
3. What mindset shifts are needed to see education as transformation, not employment?

Action Steps

- Use school data to inform discipleship and leadership development.
- Challenge institutional mindsets that resist educational reform.
- Equip gifted individuals to serve with humility and vision.

MODULE | Whom to Target as Disciple Makers and Why [Pages 72 – 75]

Theme*: Strategic discipleship begins with those who have influence, integrity, and cognitive capacity to catalyze change.*

Grounding Scripture

2 Timothy 2:2 – *"Entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others."*

Proverbs 1:5 – *"Let the wise listen and add to their learning…"*

Daniel 6:3 – *"Daniel distinguished himself… because an excellent spirit was in him."*

Puzzle Piece

INSIGHT: Systemic dysfunction—like the 14-month registration delay—reveals deeper cultural issues: nepotism, inefficiency, and corruption.Yet within these systems are individuals who see the brokenness and long for change. These are the ones to disciple.

CHALLENGE: Discipleship must move beyond the general population to intentionally target those with cognitive gifts, strategic access, and moral courage. They are often overlooked—but they are the ones who can model transformation from the inside out.

Bridge Thought | Connection

- The bridge to societal renewal is built by those who can diagnose root causes, resist corruption, and live out biblical values in public life.
- These leaders need discipleship not only in theology, but also in courage, clear communication, and strategic thinking.

Toolbox | Practical Tools

Influence Mapping: Identify individuals with access to broken systems and a desire for change.

Narrative Discipleship: Use real-life stories to teach biblical integrity and strategic action.

Integrity Groups: Form networks of leaders committed to godly influence and mutual support.

Reflection Prompts

1. Who in your context has both access and frustration with broken systems?
2. What cognitive or leadership gifts do you see in them?
3. How can you disciple them toward redemptive influence?

Action Steps

- Begin discipling high-capacity individuals with strategic access.
- Share stories of courageous integrity to inspire others.
- Form Integrity Groups to support leaders in business, government, and law.

MODULE | Engaging Conversations [Pages 75 – 76]

Theme: *Strategic conversations with cognitive leaders reveal readiness for integrity-based transformation.*

Grounding Scripture

Proverbs 20:5 – *"The purposes of a person's heart are deep waters, but one who has insight draws them out."*

Ecclesiastes 10:10 – *"If the axe is dull and its edge unsharpened, more strength is needed, but skill will bring success."*

Matthew 5:13–16 – *"You are the salt of the earth… You are the light of the world…"*

Puzzle Piece

INSIGHT: Conversations with judges, engineers, executives, and educators revealed a consistent pattern: cognitive thinkers are ready to engage. They resonate with systemic analysis, affirm the diagnosis, and respond with creativity and hope. Not once did they say, "You don't understand—you're not from here."

CHALLENGE: These thinkers are often isolated, discouraged, or underutilized. They need a framework—like Integrity Groups—to connect, support, and act redemptively.

Bridge Thought | Connection

• Conversation is the bridge between diagnosis and discipleship. When cognitive leaders are invited into meaningful dialogue, they cross from frustration to vision—and from isolation to collaboration.

Toolbox | Practical Tools

Integrity Group Formation: Use conversation as the entry point for building trust and shared purpose.

Storytelling Strategy: Share lived examples to spark imagination and ownership.

Cognitive Mapping: Identify thinkers with systemic insight and spiritual openness.

Reflection Prompts

1. Who have you spoken with that responded with insight and enthusiasm?
2. What stories have opened doors for deeper engagement?
3. How can you turn conversation into collaboration?

Action Steps

- Initiate strategic conversations with cognitive leaders.
- Share the Integrity Group vision and invite co-creation.
- Affirm and connect those who show readiness for redemptive influence.

MODULE | Misconceptions of Intelligence and Formal Education [Pages 76 – 82]

Theme: *Intelligence is multifaceted and often undervalued when reduced to formal credentials.*

Grounding Scripture

1 Samuel 16:7 – *"The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."*

Ecclesiastes 7:12 – *"Wisdom is a shelter as money is a shelter, but the advantage of knowledge is this: Wisdom preserves those who have it."*

Proverbs 4:7 – *"The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding."*

Puzzle Piece

INSIGHT: Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences reframes the question from "How smart are you?" to "How are you smart?" Yet many systems still equate intelligence with formal education and memorization. This leads to tragic mismatches between ability and opportunity—where gifted individuals are overlooked, and credentialed ones are overestimated.

CHALLENGE: Rigid credentialism stifles creativity, undervalues self-taught excellence, and perpetuates systemic inefficiency. Critical thinking can be taught—but many systems don't prioritize it.

Bridge Thought | Connection

- Bridging the gap between intelligence and education requires a shift in mindset
- From valuing certificates to valuing contribution.
- From memorization to imagination.
- From tradition to transformation.

Toolbox | Practical Tools

Critical Thinking Curriculum: Advocate for logic, problem-solving, and creativity in education systems.

Talent Recognition Framework: Identify and elevate self-taught or non-credentialed individuals with proven ability.

Narrative Reframing: Share stories that challenge assumptions about intelligence and formal education.

Reflection Prompts

1. Have you seen someone's gifting overlooked due to lack of credentials?
2. What assumptions do you hold about intelligence and education?
3. How can you affirm and elevate unconventional thinkers?

Action Steps

- Challenge credentialism in your sphere of influence.
- Create pathways for gifted individuals, regardless of formal education.
- Share stories reframing intelligence as creativity, wisdom, and problem-solving.

MODULE | The Desire to Fight Poverty and What God Says About It [Pages 82 – 84]

Theme: *Fighting poverty is a biblical mandate that integrates evangelism, discipleship, and compassionate action.*

Grounding Scripture

Proverbs 14:31– *"Whoever oppresses a poor man insults his Maker, but he who is generous to the needy honors him."*

Proverbs 28:6 – *"Better is a poor man who walks in his integrity than a rich man who is crooked in his ways."*

Luke 7:22–23– *"The blind receive their sight… the poor have good news preached to them."*

Deuteronomy 15:11 – *"You shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor…"*

Leviticus 23:22 – *"Leave them for the poor and for the sojourner: I am the Lord your God."*

Matthew 28:19– *"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations…"*

Matthew 5:14–16– *"Let your light shine before others… they may see your good works and give glory to your Father…"*

Puzzle Piece

INSIGHT: Poverty is not just economic—it's spiritual, relational, and systemic. God's concern for the poor is woven through Scripture, from gleaning laws to Jesus' ministry. The church must resist reductionist approaches and embrace a full-bodied gospel that includes both proclamation and compassion.

CHALLENGE: Many ministries focus on poverty but lose sight of discipleship. Others preach the gospel but neglect physical needs. Jesus modeled both—and so must we.

Bridge Thought | Connection

- The bridge between evangelism and compassion is holistic mission.
- When believers serve the poor with integrity and love, they embody the gospel and invite transformation.

Toolbox | Practical Tools

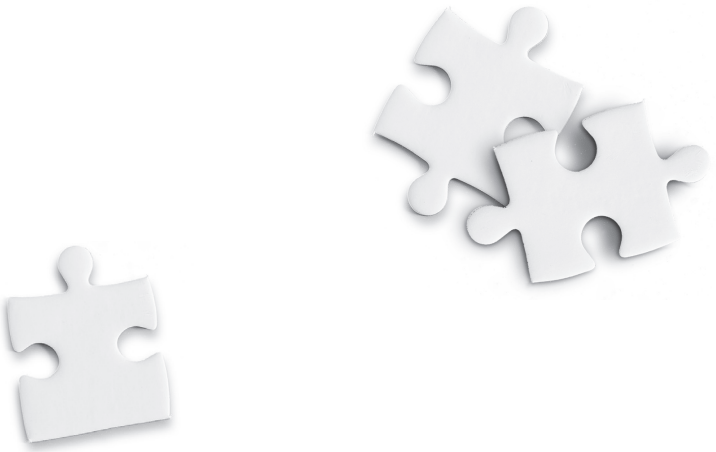
Wholistic Mission Strategy: Integrate preaching, discipleship, and practical service.
Needs Assessment Framework: Identify local crises and respond with contextual compassion.
Gospel-Driven Development: Empower churches to be agents of both spiritual and societal renewal.

Reflection Prompts

1. Where have you seen poverty addressed without discipleship—or vice versa?
2. How does your ministry reflect Jesus' model of holistic care?
3. What local needs could become opportunities for gospel witness?

Action Steps

- Equip churches to combine evangelism with compassionate service.
- Teach believers to see poverty as a spiritual and societal issue.
- Mobilize mission efforts that reflect both the Great Commission and the Great Commandment.



MODULE | Perceptions of the Need [Pages 84 – 86]

Theme: *Seeing poverty firsthand awakens compassion, but must lead to strategic, redemptive engagement.*

Grounding Scripture

Isaiah 58:6–7 – *"Is not this the fast that I choose:…..Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house?"*

Matthew 9:36 – *"When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them…"*

James 2:15–17 – *"If one of you says to them, 'Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,' but does nothing… what good is it?"*

Puzzle Piece

INSIGHT: The Authors arrival in Sub-Saharan Africa revealed a complex puzzle of poverty—visible in housing, infrastructure, sanitation, and hunger. The emotional impact was immediate: concern, compassion, and a sense of calling. But perception alone isn't enough. It must be followed by understanding, strategy, and action.

Challenge: Western perceptions of poverty often focus on material lack, missing the deeper cultural, spiritual, and systemic dimensions. Without discernment, well-meaning efforts can reinforce dependency or overlook local agency.

Bridge Thought | Connection

- The bridge from perception to transformation is built through humility, listening, and contextual engagement.
- Seeing the need is the beginning—but walking with people toward redemptive solutions is the goal.

Toolbox | Practical Tools

Cultural Immersion: Encourage long-term presence and listening before acting.

Asset-Based Development: Focus on local strengths, not just deficits.

Narrative Reflection: Use personal stories to shape strategy and deepen empathy.

Reflection Prompts

1. When have you experienced a shift in perception through direct exposure?
2. How can you move from emotional response to strategic engagement?
3. What assumptions about poverty need to be challenged in your context?

Action Steps

- Share your story to awaken compassion and challenge stereotypes.
- Equip others to see poverty through a biblical and systemic lens.
- Build strategies that honor local dignity and foster long-term transformation.

MODULE | Adjusting Our Biases [Pages 86 – 88]

Theme: *True service begins when we recognize and release our cultural assumptions, embracing God's work already unfolding in local contexts.*

Grounding Scripture

Romans 12:2 – *"Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind…"*

Acts 10:34–35 – *"God does not show favoritism but accepts from every nation the one who fears him…"*

Proverbs 3:5–6 – *"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding…"*

Puzzle Piece

INSIGHT: The authors early assumptions about poverty were shaped by American cultural standards—projected unconsciously onto a different context. Over time, he saw joy, resilience, and contentment in the local community, challenging his initial perceptions. The puzzle wasn't just external—it was internal: learning to see through others' eyes and adjust our framework is important.

CHALLENGE: Biases can distort our understanding of need and mission. Without reflection, we risk imposing solutions that miss the mark. True transformation requires rethinking what "flourishing" looks like in each cultural setting.

Bridge Thought | Connection

- The bridge from bias to blessing is built through listening, learning, and honoring local leadership.
- The author's encounter with Robert and the valley church revealed God's work already underway—inviting him to join, not direct.

Toolbox | Practical Tools

Cultural Self-Awareness: Reflect on your own worldview and assumptions.

Local Partnership: Support indigenous leaders like Robert who embody contextual faithfulness.

Language Learning: Engage with intention by aligning your words and pace to resonate with the heartbeat of the culture.

Reflection Prompts

1. What cultural assumptions shaped your view of poverty or development?
2. How can you discern between real needs and perceived needs?
3. In what ways can you honor and amplify local leadership?

Action Steps

- Practice cultural humility by listening before acting.
- Share stories that affirm local capacity, creativity and spiritual vitality.
- Reframe development goals around dignity, discipleship, and contextual flourishing.

MODULE | That Doesn't Apply to Us, Another Misconception [Pages 88 – 90]

Theme: *True transformation begins when communities see themselves as contributors to God's mission, not just recipients of aid.*

Grounding Scripture

James 2:14–17 – *"Faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead."*
Acts 2:44–45 – *"All the believers were together and had everything in common… they gave to anyone as he had need."*
2 Corinthians 8:1–4 – The Macedonian churches gave generously *"even beyond their ability."*

Puzzle Piece

INSIGHT: The misconception that "we're poor, we can only receive" was deeply ingrained in the village church. The study in James challenged this mindset, revealing that spiritual maturity includes generosity and service. The puzzle shifted: from external need to internal identity—what does it mean to be the church in action?
CHALLENGE: Western aid often reinforces dependency by doing for others what they can do themselves. Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) flips the script—starting with what people have, not what they lack.

Bridge Thought | Connection

- The water project became a bridge—initiated by the church, supported by outside funding, but carried by local effort.
- It modeled a new identity: the church as servant-leader, not passive recipient.

Toolbox | Practical Tools

ABCD Framework: Begin with local assets—skills, relationships, spiritual gifts.
Discipleship Lens: Frame development as spiritual formation, not just material aid.
Community Ownership: Ensure projects require meaningful local investment and leadership.

Reflection Prompts

1. What misconceptions about poverty or generosity exist in your context?
2. How can you help others see themselves as contributors to God's mission?
3. What does it look like to disciple through development?

Action Steps

- Use scripture to challenge limiting beliefs about poverty and agency.
- Design projects that require local leadership and labor.
- Share stories that highlight transformation through participation, not just provision.

MODULE | Keeping Our Eyes on the Road Will Keep Us on It [Pages 90 – 93]

Theme: *Discipleship is the road—and staying focused on it ensures lasting transformation, not just temporary relief.*

Grounding Scripture

Matthew 28:19–20 – *"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations…"*
1 John 3:16–18 – *"Let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth."*
Proverbs 21:13 – *"Whoever closes his ear to the cry of the poor will himself call out and not be answered."*

Puzzle Piece

INSIGHT: The puzzle of poverty includes real needs—medical, educational, financial—but the deeper challenge is staying focused on the road of discipleship. The authors experience in West Africa revealed both the beauty and complexity of responding to need: discernment, accountability, and relational investment were key. The puzzle pieces must fit into a larger picture—one shaped by the Great Commission and the call to spiritual maturity.

CHALLENGE: When physical needs dominate our focus, the church's mission can drift. Helping must be paired with discipleship, or we risk short-term fixes without long-term fruit.

Bridge Thought | Connection

- The bridge between compassion and transformation is built through wise stewardship and relational accountability.
- The support of students and patients modeled this—helping with expectations, follow-up, and spiritual encouragement.

Toolbox | Practical Tools

Discipleship-Centered Aid: Frame all help within a spiritual growth context.
Relational Accountability: Stay connected with those you support—follow up, encourage, and challenge.
Wise Stewardship: Vet requests through trusted local structures (e.g., chaplaincy) to ensure integrity.

Reflection Prompts

1. How do you balance compassion with discernment in ministry?
2. What does it mean to disciple through financial or educational support?
3. How can you stay focused on the road of transformation amid urgent needs?

Action Steps

- Prioritize discipleship in every act of service.
- Build systems of accountability and follow-up for those you support.
- Equip volunteers to respond wisely, not just generously.

MODULE | If We Teach the Whole Council of God, Don't Contradict It [Pages 93 – 94]

Theme: *Biblical teaching must be matched by biblical practice—especially in how we steward resources and empower others.*

Grounding Scripture

Acts 20:27 – *"For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God."*

1 Thessalonians 4:10b–12 – *"…make it your ambition to lead a quiet life… so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you'll not be dependent on anybody."*

James 1:22 – *"Do not merely listen to the word… Do what it says."*

Puzzle Piece

INSIGHT: Cross-cultural partnerships often teach biblical truth while unintentionally modeling contradiction—especially around money and mission. Dependency becomes embedded when churches are treated as recipients rather than co-laborers. The puzzle is theological and practical: how do we align doctrine with discipleship, teaching with empowerment?

CHALLENGE: If we preach self-sufficiency, stewardship, and service—but reinforce dependency through our actions—we undermine the very gospel we proclaim. Functional theology must be shaped by the whole counsel of God, not just selective application.

Bridge Thought | Connection

- The bridge between teaching and transformation is built through consistency—living out the truths we proclaim.
- Churches thrive when they are equipped to serve, grow, and reproduce—not when they are perpetually subsidized.

Toolbox | Practical Tools

Functional Theology Audit: Review ministry practices for alignment with biblical teaching.

Empowerment Framework: Shift from giving to equipping—develop self-sustaining, reproducing churches.

Transparent Dialogue: Discuss expectations and long-term goals openly with partner churches.

Reflection Prompts

1. Where might your ministry practices contradict your theological convictions?
2. How can you model biblical stewardship and empowerment in cross-cultural contexts?
3. What does it mean to teach the whole counsel of God in both word and deed?

Action Steps

- Align financial practices with biblical principles of dignity and discipleship.
- Equip partner churches to grow, serve, and multiply within their own context.
- Use passages like 1 Thessalonians 4 to challenge dependency and inspire maturity.

MODULE | Care, Concern, and Assumptions [Pages 94 – 96]

Theme: *Compassion must be paired with discernment—otherwise, our help can unintentionally harm those we seek to serve.*

Grounding Scripture

Proverbs 19:17 – *"Whoever is generous to the poor lends to the Lord, and he will repay him for his deed."*

Deuteronomy 15:11 – *"You shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor, in your land."*

Matthew 5:16 – *"Let your light shine before others… that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."*

Puzzle Piece

INSIGHT: Holiday gift boxes often reflect Western assumptions about what people need to be happy—material items, toys, hygiene products. But these assumptions can lead to unintended consequences: jealousy, economic disruption, and cultural confusion. The puzzle is not just what to give—but how to give in ways that honor dignity, context, and discipleship.

CHALLENGE: Sending free items like toothpaste or toys may seem helpful, but they can undercut local vendors like Faith, who rely on selling those very items to support their families. Aid must be thoughtful, not just emotional—rooted in understanding, not projection.

Bridge Thought | Connection

- The bridge from concern to transformation is built through relationship, listening, and contextual engagement.
- The authors experience in West Africa revealed that people often have what they need—and what they lack is opportunity, not charity.

Toolbox | Practical Tools

Contextual Listening: Learn what people actually need before assuming.
Economic Sensitivity: Avoid disrupting local markets with free goods.
Discipleship-Driven Aid: Frame generosity within a biblical model of empowerment and spiritual growth.

Reflection Prompts

1. What assumptions shape your view of poverty and generosity?
2. How can you ensure your giving affirms dignity/supports local economies?
3. What does it mean to serve with both compassion and wisdom?

Action Steps

- Evaluate aid programs for unintended consequences.
- Share stories like Faith's to break stereotypes and show how local people lead and make change.
- Teach others to give in ways that build the Kingdom, not just meet perceived needs.

MODULE | Help Them Be Salt and Light [Pages 98 – 100]

Theme: *Giving must be contextual, strategic, and discipleship-driven—empowering believers to reflect Christ in every stage of life and crisis.*

Grounding Scripture

Ephesians 2:10 – *"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works…"*

Matthew 5:13–14 – *"You are the salt of the earth… You are the light of the world."*

Deuteronomy 15:11 – *"You shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor…"*

Puzzle Piece

INSIGHT: Giving is not always appropriate—especially when needs are already being met or when aid disrupts dignity and local systems. Corbett and Fikkert's framework (crisis → rehabilitation → development) helps clarify when and how to give. The example from Haiti shows the danger of prolonged crisis-mode giving: billions in aid, but little transformation.
CHALLENGE: We must avoid creating dependency or undermining sanctification. God's Word applies to all people, regardless of material wealth. Our role is to strengthen the church, not replace its function.

Bridge Thought | Connection

- The bridge from crisis to development must be walked with discernment.
- Giving should empower believers to be salt and light—not distract them from their calling.

Toolbox | Practical Tools

Crisis Discernment Framework: Use the three-stage model to guide giving decisions.
Sanctification Lens: Ask how aid contributes to spiritual growth and church strengthening.
Empowerment Strategy: Equip believers to reflect Christ in their own context, not mimic foreign models.

Reflection Prompts

1. When is giving helpful—and when might it hinder growth?
2. How can you discern between crisis and development needs?
3. What does it mean to help others be salt and light in their own culture?

Action Steps

- Teach the three-stage framework to churches and donors.
- Use Scripture to affirm believers' identity and calling in every context.
- Give strategically—supporting sanctification, not substituting for it.

MODULE | Spiritual Capital and the Economy [Pages 100 – 104]

Theme: *Societies flourish when biblical values are consistently lived out—especially by those in positions of influence. Without spiritual capital, development stalls.*

Grounding Scripture

2 Chronicles 7:14 – *"If my people who are called by my name humble themselves…"*

Proverbs 14:34 – *"Righteousness exalts a nation,but sin is a reproach to any people."*

Colossians 3:23–24 – *"Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord…"*

Puzzle Piece

INSIGHT: Just as financial capital fuels business, spiritual capital fuels trust, integrity, and societal health. Biblical values—when consistently lived—generate spiritual capital. Without it, corruption corrodes systems, and development collapses.

CHALLENGE: Many societies are spiritually bankrupt. Even Christian leaders may lack transformative witness if values aren't consistently applied. Spiritual capital must be deposited through trustworthy, principled behavior.

Bridge Thought | Connection

- Spiritual capital bridges the gap between economic potential and sustainable development.
- It enables justice systems, business environments, and civic trust to flourish.

Toolbox | Practical Tools

Capital Comparison: Use financial capital as a metaphor to explain spiritual capital.

Deposit/Withdrawal Framework: Teach how actions either build or erode spiritual trust.

Leadership Lens: Equip influencers to model biblical values in public life.

Reflection Prompts

1. What deposits are you making into your community's spiritual capital account?
2. How does consistent integrity impact development?
3. Where do you see spiritual bankruptcy hindering growth?

Action Steps

- Teach the concept of spiritual capital to church leaders and influencers.
- Use real-world examples (e.g., Soviet collapse, African development) to illustrate impact.
- Encourage consistent application of biblical values in all spheres of life.

MODULE | When Spiritual Capital Is Missing [Pages 104 – 106]

Theme: *Without spiritual capital—trust, integrity, and moral conviction—economic development cannot thrive, no matter how abundant the resources.*

Grounding Scripture

Proverbs 14:34 – *"Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people."*

Psalm 11:3 – *"When the foundations are being destroyed, what can the righteous do?"*

Micah 6:8 – *"To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."*

Puzzle Piece

INSIGHT: The collapse of the Soviet Union opened doors for Western investment—but without spiritual capital, corruption flourished. Business leaders faced theft, bribery, and lawlessness. Justice systems offered no protection. The problem wasn't economic—it was moral. Without a foundation of biblical values, development was doomed.

CHALLENGE: Many underdeveloped nations face the same dilemma: vast resources, but no trustworthy systems. Spiritual capital must be deposited through consistent integrity, principled leadership, and gospel witness.

Bridge Thought | Connection

- The bridge to sustainable development is built on spiritual infrastructure: justice, honesty, and accountability.
- Without it, even the best economic plans collapse under the weight of corruption.

Toolbox | Practical Tools

Case Study Analysis: Use the Soviet collapse to illustrate the cost of spiritual bankruptcy.

Justice System Audit: Evaluate whether local systems support or undermine integrity.

Leadership Discipleship: Equip influencers to model biblical values in business and governance.

Reflection Prompts

1. Where do you see spiritual capital lacking in your context?
2. How does corruption erode trust and opportunity?
3. What role can the church play in rebuilding moral foundations?

Action Steps

- Teach the link between spiritual capital and societal flourishing.
- Disciple leaders in integrity, justice, and public faith.
- Advocate for systems that reward righteousness and protect against exploitation.

MODULE | Cultural Understanding of Government [Pages 106 – 108]

Theme: *Political structures are deeply shaped by cultural traditions, tribal history, and spiritual vocabulary. Without understanding these roots, reform efforts may backfire or deepen division.*

Grounding Scripture

Matthew 7:12 – *"So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them…"*

Matthew 22:37–39 – *"Love the Lord your God… Love your neighbor as yourself."*

Philippians 2:3 – *"In humility count others more significant than yourselves."*

Puzzle Piece

INSIGHT: Western models of democracy assume shared values like compromise, accountability, and term limits. But in tribal societies, leadership is spiritual, lifelong, and communal. The puzzle isn't just political—it's linguistic and cultural. If a language lacks words for "compromise" or "accountability," how can those ideas take root?

CHALLENGE: Imported systems often clash with indigenous values. Reform must begin with transformed hearts, not just new structures.

Bridge Thought | Connection

- Bridging cultural gaps requires humility and contextual wisdom.
- True transformation comes when biblical values are embodied—not imposed.

Toolbox | Practical Tools

Worldview Mapping: Compare tribal leadership models with Western democratic assumptions.

Language Audit: Identify missing spiritual capital terms and explore how to teach them.

Cultural Discipleship: Equip believers to live out biblical values in culturally meaningful ways.

Reflection Prompts

1. How does your cultural context shape expectations of leadership and power?
2. What spiritual capital words are missing or misunderstood in your setting?
3. How can biblical values be translated—not just linguistically, but culturally?

Action Steps

- Teach biblical principles of servant leadership, justice, and humility.
- Translate spiritual capital into culturally meaningful practices.
- Disciple leaders to embody godly character within their own traditions.

MODULE | Whole Life Discipleship [Pages 109 – 115]

Theme: *Discipleship is not limited to spiritual teaching or meeting physical needs—it is the lifelong apprenticeship of becoming like Jesus in every area of life. When believers understand who God truly is and embrace His lordship over all, cultural transformation begins from the inside out.*

Grounding Scripture

Matthew 28:19–20 – *"Go and make disciples of all nations…"*
Romans 12:1–2 – *"Present your bodies as a living sacrifice… be transformed by the renewal of your mind."*
Colossians 3:17 – *"Whatever you do… do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus."*
Philippians 2:3–11 – *"In humility count others more significant than yourselves…"*

Puzzle Piece

INSIGHT: Ministry has often focused on two pillars: spiritual teaching and meeting physical needs. While both are vital, they can miss the deeper transformation that comes from whole-life discipleship where believers are apprenticed to live out their faith in homes, workplaces, and communities.

In many cultures, discipleship is best understood through apprenticeship. In pidgin English, the word for disciple is "learn boy"—a learner shaped by the master's example. This language captures the essence of biblical discipleship more clearly than abstract theological terms.
CHALLENGE: Church traditions and educational models often emphasize memorizing theology over embodying it. To fulfill the Great Commission, we must disciple believers who reflect Christ in culturally meaningful ways and train others to do the same. As A.W. Tozer wrote, "What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us." A low view of God leads to shallow discipleship. A high view leads to whole-life transformation.

Bridge Thought | Connection

1. Discipleship is deeply personal and deeply cultural. Gospel movements flourish when local believers—those who understand the language, idioms, and history—embody Jesus in their own context.
2. They know where cultural values must shift and how to disciple others from the inside out.
3. Whole-life discipleship means there is no area of life Jesus does not own, and no part He does not want to use for His glory.

Toolbox | Practical Tools

Apprenticeship Model: Frame discipleship as "learning by doing" with relational mentoring.
Church Culture Audit: Reflect on your church's view of God and how it shapes worship and discipleship.
Application-Based Teaching: Shift from memorization to life integration in Bible studies and seminary training.
Local Multipliers: Identify and equip culturally rooted leaders to disciple others
Vision Alignment: Revisit mission statements to ensure they prioritize disciple-making in everyday life

Reflection Prompts

1. What does "whole-life discipleship" look like in your cultural context?
2. How does your church's view of God shape its priorities and practices?
3. Where does your current teaching model emphasize knowledge over transformation?
4. Who are the local leaders best positioned to multiply disciples in unreached areas?

Action Steps

- Teach a high view of God that inspires whole-life obedience
- Reorient discipleship toward Christlike living in homes, workplaces, and communities
- Equip culturally fluent believers to lead Gospel movements in their own contexts
- Translate discipleship into culturally resonant language and practices
- Develop mentoring relationships that model whole-life obedience and cultural wisdom

MODULE | A Perfect Cross-Cultural Partnership [Pages 115 – 122]

Theme: *True partnership is built on mutual trust, shared calling, and Spirit-led generosity—not on power, wealth, or control.*

Grounding Scripture

Deuteronomy 15:11 – *"You shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor, in your land."*

Philippians 2:4 – *"Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others."*

2 Corinthians 8:13–14 – *"Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality."*

Puzzle Piece

INSIGHT: Western missionaries often struggle to form genuine friendships in contexts of material need. But in this story, Spirit-led generosity unlocked a partnership rooted in trust. The chaplain and his wife were already serving faithfully—without fanfare or funding. The rice was not charity—it was confirmation. The puzzle wasn't logistical—it was relational. God orchestrated a moment that revealed the power of mutual discipleship.

CHALLENGE: Cross-cultural partnerships must be built on shared vision and respect. When one side gives and the other receives, inequality can poison the relationship. But when both sides serve, sacrifice, and listen to God together, spiritual capital multiplies.

Bridge Thought | Connection

- The bridge between cultures is built through humility, consistency, and shared mission.
- This partnership worked because both parties honored each other's strengths and trusted God's provision.

Toolbox | Practical Tools

Mutuality Audit: Evaluate whether your partnerships reflect shared calling or dependency.

Storytelling Practice: Use testimonies like this to teach spiritual capital and relational integrity.

Consistency Tracker: Encourage consistent character as the currency of trust.

Reflection Prompts

1. Where have you seen cross-cultural partnerships thrive—or fail?
2. What role does consistency play in building trust across cultures?
3. How can generosity be Spirit-led rather than program-driven?

Action Steps

- Share stories that model mutuality and Spirit-led generosity.
- Build partnerships that honor local leadership and lived faith.
- Equip believers to serve consistently, not just occasionally.

MODULE | Putting It into Action—
An Integrity Group [Pages 122 – 128]

Theme: *Cultural transformation begins when believers organize around shared values, stand against corruption, and live out godly integrity in every sphere of influence.*

Grounding Scripture

Philippians 2:2 *"Then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind."*

1 Corinthians 1:10 *"I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and thought."*

1 Peter 4:10 *"Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms".*

Puzzle Piece

INSIGHT: Development fails when cultural values resist integrity. Aid money, programs, and infrastructure cannot succeed without moral foundations. The puzzle is behavioral: how do we shift values on a large scale? The answer is discipleship in action—through integrity groups that model and multiply godly behavior.

CHALLENGE: Corruption thrives in isolation. But when believers unite across sectors—justice, government, business, education—they create a support structure that resists compromise and inspires hope.

Bridge Thought | Connection

- The bridge from frustration to transformation is built through organized integrity.
- When believers collaborate, share stories, and disciple one another, they become a visible testimony to the Gospel's power.

Toolbox | Practical Tools

Integrity Group Structure: Organize believers by sector and influence level (local/state, small/large business, etc.).
Testimony Sharing: Use stories of resistance and renewal to inspire courage and consistency.
Discipleship Curriculum: Develop lessons on spiritual capital, trust, and whole-life obedience for group training.

Reflection Prompts

1. Where do you see pockets of integrity already at work in your context?
2. What barriers prevent believers from living out their faith publicly?
3. How could a cross-sector integrity group support and multiply godly influence?

Action Steps

- Launch pilot integrity groups in key sectors with trusted leaders.
- Equip groups with training on spiritual capital, trust, and biblical ethics.
- Foster collaboration, storytelling, and mutual support to resist corruption and model transformation.

MODULE | Salt and Light, Are We? [Pages 128 – 136]

Theme: *Jesus calls His followers to be visible agents of transformation—preserving truth, exposing darkness, and glorifying God through public witness.*

Grounding Scripture

Matthew 5:13–16 – *"You are the salt of the earth… You are the light of the world… Let your light shine before others…"*
John 3:19–21 – *"People loved the darkness rather than the light… But whoever does what is true comes to the light…"*
Matthew 6:21 – *"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."*
John 15:18–19 – *"If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you…"*

Puzzle Piece

INSIGHT: Many believers live with a private faith—kind, respectful, but hidden. But salt and light only work when applied. Wilberforce and the Clapham Sect modeled public discipleship: they endured persecution, gave sacrificially, and transformed society. The puzzle isn't theological—it's behavioral. How do we move from passive belief to active influence?
CHALLENGE: Faith that never touches culture remains invisible. Jesus warns that salt without flavor is useless, and light hidden under a basket is wasted. We must reclaim a vision of discipleship that includes politics, economics, and public life.

Bridge Thought | Connection

- The bridge from private spirituality to public transformation is built through courageous obedience.
- Shine light where it's uncomfortable; preserve truth where it's under attack.

Toolbox | Practical Tools

Wilberforce Case Study: Use his story to illustrate perseverance, public faith, and systemic impact.
Sacred/Secular Audit: Help believers identify where they've compartmentalized their faith.
Salt & Light Challenge: Encourage believers to take one visible step of obedience in their workplace or community.

Reflection Prompts

1. Where have you hidden your light out of fear or habit?
2. What does it mean to be salt in your profession or community?
3. How can you model public faith without arrogance or coercion?

Action Steps

- Teach the biblical call to public discipleship using salt and light metaphors.
- Share stories of believers who influence culture with integrity and courage.
- Equip believers to engage society redemptively, even when it brings persecution.

MODULE | God's Love and God's Hate [Pages 136 – 138]

Theme: *To love like God is to hate evil. True discipleship requires moral clarity, spiritual courage, and public action rooted in God's character.*

Grounding Scripture

1 John 4:7–12 – *"Beloved, let us love one another… God is love… If we love one another, God abides in us…"*

Romans 12:9 – *"Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good."*

Proverbs 6:16–19 – *"There are six things the Lord hates… seven that are an abomination to Him…"*

Isaiah 1:17 – *"Learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression…"*

Puzzle Piece

INSIGHT: Many believers embrace God's love but ignore His hatred of evil. Yet Scripture shows these are inseparable: God hates what harms those He loves. The puzzle is emotional and ethical: how do we cultivate love that is strong enough to resist injustice? The story of the land dispute shows this vividly—love without action is just nice sentiment. Love with hate for evil becomes justice.

CHALLENGE: If we only "like" good and "dislike" evil, we remain passive. But when we love what God loves and hate what He hates, we act. This is the heart of spiritual capital: moral conviction that leads to courageous intervention.

Bridge Thought | Connection

- The bridge from compassion to justice is built through holy hatred of evil.
- God's love is not soft—it is fierce, protective, and active. We must reflect that in how we engage broken systems.

Toolbox | Practical Tools

Values Audit: Compare societal values with Proverbs 6 to identify what God hates.

Justice Activation: Use Isaiah 1:17 to mobilize believers toward public righteousness.

Story-Based Training: Teach through real-life examples of moral courage and intervention.

Reflection Prompts

1. Where have you tolerated evil out of fear or passivity?
2. What does it mean to "abhor" (detest) evil in your context?
3. How can love and hate work together to produce justice?

Action Steps

- Teach the inseparable link between God's love and His hatred of evil.
- Equip believers to act when injustice threatens the vulnerable.
- Model moral courage through stories, scripture, and community support.

MODULE | Bearing His Image [Pages 140 – 143]

Theme: *We are created to reflect God's character in every sphere of life. Discipleship is the process of learning to use the tools of Christlikeness to build lives, communities, and cultures that honor Him.*

Grounding Scripture

Genesis 1:27 – *"So God created mankind in his own image… male and female he created them."*

Colossians 3:10 – *"…being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator."*

Ephesians 2:10 – *"For we are God's workmanship… created in Christ Jesus to do good works…"*

Romans 8:29 – *"…to be conformed to the image of his Son…"*

Puzzle Piece

INSIGHT: We are image-bearers of God, designed to reflect His nature—not just in church, but in every aspect of life. Yet many believers struggle with partial discipleship: loving what God loves, but failing to hate what He hates. The puzzle is incomplete when we neglect justice, courage, and public faith.

CHALLENGE: Discipleship must move beyond personal spirituality to societal engagement. We need tools—truth, character, courage—to build lives that reflect the full image of Christ.

Bridge Thought | Connection

- The bridge from belief to transformation is built through apprenticeship.
- We must learn the principles of the trade—how to live as redemptive change agents in our homes, workplaces, and nations.

Toolbox | Practical Tools

Redemptive Change Agent Definition (Osburn): "A disciple of Christ who takes the risk to solve problems in their home society or workplace on the basis of a Christian worldview."

1234 Model of Human Flourishing: Introduce Osburn's framework for holistic discipleship.

Craftsmanship Lens: Use construction metaphors to teach intentional, skillful spiritual formation.

Reflection Prompts

1. Where have you reflected God's image well—and where is it still incomplete?
2. What tools of Christlikeness do you need to sharpen or learn to use?
3. How can you become a redemptive change agent in your sphere of influence?

Action Steps

- Study Jesus' life and character as a master craftsman of redemption.
- Equip believers with practical tools for public faith and cultural engagement.
- Teach the 1234 Model to help disciples understand their capacities and calling.

TOOLBOX INSERT

1234 Model of Human Flourishing [Pages 143 – 146]

Purpose: *Equip readers with a holistic framework for understanding their identity, purpose, and redemptive potential.*

Grounding Scripture

Genesis 1:26–28 – Humanity's identity and purpose in 118 words: image bearing, dominion, fruitfulness, and partnership.

John 15:8, 15:17; Romans 5:5; John 17:2–4 – Glorifying God through productivity, responsibility, and love.

Model Overview

Cue: 1 + 2 + 3 + 4 = 10 (the number of fingers—tools for building and blessing)

Number	Element	Description
1	Supreme Goal	Glorify God and enjoy Him
2	Dual Purposes	• Carefully protect God's creation • Creatively produce goods and services
3	Functional Capacities	• Productive • Responsible • Creative
4	Intrinsic Capacities	• Moral • Rational • Social • Spiritual

Practical Implications

- Each layer supports the one above: intrinsic → functional → purpose → goal.
- Redemptive change restores our ability to live out this full design.
- Discipleship must equip believers to function as protectors, producers, and image-bearers in every sphere.

Reflection Prompts

1. Which of the four intrinsic capacities do you most naturally express? Which needs growth?
2. How do your functional capacities show up in your work, relationships, or service?
3. What does it mean for you to glorify God and enjoy Him in your current context?

Action Steps

- Teach the 1234 Model as a diagnostic and developmental tool.
- Use it to assess cultural health, vocational calling, and spiritual maturity.
- Encourage believers to pursue redemptive change that restores full humanity.

MODULE | The Ugliness of Satan and the Beauty of Christ [Pages 146 –148]

Theme: *Redemptive change begins with seeing clearly—recognizing the distortion of evil and goodness.*

Grounding Scripture

Colossians 2:15 – *"He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame…"*

1 Corinthians 15:55–57 – *"O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?"*

Acts 26:18 – *"…to turn from the power of Satan to God…"*

2 Corinthians 4:4–6 – *"…the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ…"*

Puzzle Piece

INSIGHT: Many believers live with a fractured puzzle—engaging functional capacities (2, 3, 4) but missing the supreme goal (1). Without glorifying God, even good efforts become corrupted. Satan's influence distorts our capacities, but Christ restores them through redemption.

CHALLENGE: We must see the contrast: Satan's ugliness vs. Christ's beauty. Only redeemed values can realign our capacities toward God's glory.

Bridge Thought | Connection

- The bridge from blindness to sight is built through the Gospel.
- As believers turn from Satan's lies to Christ's light, they become salt and light—contrast agents in a dark world.

Toolbox | Practical Tools

Contrast Lens: Teach believers to discern distortion vs. beauty in culture and character.

1234 Diagnostic: Use the model to assess societal breakdowns—where "1" is missing, corruption follows.

Redemptive Vision: Equip believers to glorify God by living out all four capacities under Christ's lordship.

Reflection Prompts

1. Where do you see the "1" missing in your life or society?
2. How has Satan distorted your view of beauty, purpose, or identity?
3. What does it mean to glorify God in your workplace, community, or culture?

Action Steps

- Teach the contrast between Satan's distortion and Christ's restoration.
- Use the 1234 Model to diagnose and disciple toward full flourishing.
- Encourage believers to live visibly as salt and light—beauty in the midst of brokenness.

MODULE | The Four Intrinsic Capacities [Pages 149 –152]

Theme: *Our moral, rational, social, and spiritual capacities form the foundation of human behavior. These capacities are shaped by values—and those values determine whether our lives reflect corruption or redemption.*

Grounding Scripture

Romans 12:2 – *"Be transformed by the renewing of your mind…"*
Exodus 20:15 – *"You shall not steal."*
Matthew 6:33 – *"Seek first the kingdom of God…"*
Mark 12:30–31 – *"Love the Lord your God… Love your neighbor as yourself."*
John 3:6 – *"That which is born of the Spirit is spirit."*

Puzzle Piece

INSIGHT: Our intrinsic capacities operate like a hidden database—shaping how we think, relate, and choose. This database is built from values, worldview, education, and experience. Godly values lead to objective morality and redemptive outcomes. Ungodly values distort behavior and reinforce corruption.

CHALLENGE: The moral capacity is the keystone. It influences how we reason, relate, and respond spiritually. Without spiritual rebirth, our values remain subjective—driven by convenience or self-interest.

Bridge Thought | Connection

- The bridge from corruption to redemption begins with spiritual rebirth.
- Only when we are made alive in Christ can our values be reshaped and our capacities realigned.

Toolbox | Practical Tools

Values Examination: Help believers identify the sources shaping their moral database.

Capacity Mapping: Show how each intrinsic capacity influences functional behavior.

Transformation Connection: Teach how spiritual rebirth leads to renewed values and redeemed action.

Reflection Prompts

1. What inputs have shaped your moral database—culture, family, Scripture, experience?
2. How does your rational capacity reflect your values in decision-making?
3. In what ways has your spiritual capacity been awakened or neglected?

Action Steps

- Teach believers to examine their intrinsic capacities through the lens of Scripture.
- Encourage spiritual rebirth as the foundation for redemptive transformation.
- Use real-life examples to show how values shape behavior and outcomes.

MODULE | The Three Functional Capacities and the Purpose of Producing Goods and Services [Pages 152 – 158]

Theme: *God designed humanity to be productive, responsible, and creative—capacities that enable us to fulfill His directive to protect creation and produce goods and services that glorify Him.*

Grounding Scripture

Genesis 1:28 – *"Be fruitful and multiply… fill the earth and subdue it…"*
Deuteronomy 31:19–22 – God's warning against turning from Him after receiving abundance
Jeremiah 29:11–12 – *"Plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope."*

Puzzle Piece

INSIGHT: Functional capacities are the tools by which we carry out our purposes. When corruption distorts these capacities, societies suffer—even when resources are abundant. Godly productivity is not just about output—it's about redemptive impact.
CHALLENGE: Corruption is the major obstacle to flourishing. Aid without responsibility leads to dependency. True development requires integrity, initiative, and godly stewardship.

Bridge Thought | Connection

- The bridge from poverty to flourishing is built through responsible productivity.
- Even the materially poor can contribute meaningfully when empowered with purpose and dignity.

Toolbox | Practical Tools

Functional Capacity Mapping: Help believers identify and grow in productivity, responsibility, and creativity.
Redemptive Work Lens: Reframe secular jobs as ministry—meeting needs and glorifying God.
Integrity Groups: Mobilize believers in positions of influence to resist corruption and build flourishing systems.

Reflection Prompts

1. How do your work and skills reflect God's image as productive, responsible, and creative?
2. Where have you seen corruption hinder flourishing—and how might believers respond redemptively?
3. What would it look like to treat your job as ministry?

Action Steps

- Teach believers to see work as worship and service.
- Encourage vocational stewardship—using skills to meet needs and glorify God.
- Equip Integrity Groups to model redemptive leadership in every sector.

MODULE | The Three Functional Capacities and the Purpose to Protect God's Good Creation [Pages 159 – 169]

Theme: *God calls us to protect His creation—not only the physical world, but also the institutions, people, and truths He has established. This protection requires productivity, responsibility, and creativity rooted in godly values.*

Grounding Scripture

Genesis 1:28 – *"Be fruitful and multiply… fill the earth and subdue it…"*
Psalm 82:3–4 – *"Give justice to the weak and the fatherless…"*
Ecclesiastes 4:1 – *"The tears of the oppressed… and they had no one to comfort them."*
2 Timothy 3:16–17 – *"All Scripture is breathed out by God…"*
1 Peter 3:15 – *"Always be prepared to make a defense…"*
Galatians 6:1 – *"Restore him in a spirit of gentleness…"*

Puzzle Piece

INSIGHT: Protection is not just environmental—it's spiritual, relational, institutional. God's creation includes families, governments, doctrine, and the Gospel. Functional capacities must be guided by godly intrinsic values to protect what matters most.

CHALLENGE: Corruption distorts productivity and creativity. Only when responsibility is present—rooted in godly values—can protection be redemptive.

Bridge Thought | Connection

- The bridge from brokenness to flourishing is built by people willing to be protectors of others.
- Integrity Groups can embody Christ's beauty by defending the vulnerable, the truth, and each other.

Toolbox | Practical Tools

Integrity Group Model: Mobilize believers in influential roles to resist corruption and protect what God values.
Protection Mapping: Identify areas of creation under attack—earth, people, institutions, doctrine.
Functional Capacity Alignment: Ensure productivity and creativity are guided by responsibility and godly values.

Reflection Prompts

1. What areas of God's creation are you uniquely positioned to protect?
2. How does your work reflect responsibility, not just output?
3. Where do you see corruption—and how might you respond redemptively?

Action Steps

- Teach believers to see protection as a spiritual calling.
- Equip Integrity Groups to defend the vulnerable and uphold truth.
- Encourage believers to live visibly—so their righteousness prompts questions and opens doors for witness.

FINAL MODULE | Diagnosis to Discipleship [General Summary]

Theme: *Cultural transformation begins with clarity—about what's broken, what God desires, and how His people can respond. Integrity Groups are the practical outworking of spiritual capital, whole-life discipleship, and redemptive influence.*

Grounding Scripture

Matthew 5:13–16 – *"You are the salt of the earth… You are the light of the world…"*

Romans 12:2 – *"Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed…"*

Micah 6:8 – *"Act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God."*

Puzzle Piece

INSIGHT: This guide has diagnosed the puzzle of poverty, corruption, and cultural decay. We've explored how spiritual capital, worldview, and discipleship shape development. Now we turn to the solution: believers living visibly, courageously, and collaboratively.

CHALLENGE: Transformation won't come through programs alone. It requires people of integrity—redeemed, equipped, and connected—who reflect Christ in every sphere.

Bridge Thought | Connection

- The bridge from broken systems to flourishing societies is built by believers who live out the Gospel in public life.
- Integrity Groups can be that bridge—communities of courage, consistency, and redemptive action.

Toolbox | Practical Tools

Integrity Group Framework: Cross-sector communities of believers committed to resisting corruption and modeling godly values.

1234 Model Application: Use the model to diagnose personal and societal health, and guide discipleship.

Spiritual Capital Strategy: Equip believers to deposit trust, truth, and transformation into their communities.

Reflection Prompts

1. What part of the puzzle has most resonated with your experience?
2. Where are you called to be salt and light—in your profession, community, or culture?
3. Who could you invite into an Integrity Group to begin living this out together?

Action Steps

- Form or join an Integrity Group in your sphere of influence.
- Use this guide to teach others about spiritual capital & whole-life discipleship.
- Begin living visibly—so your life prompts questions, and your answers point to Christ.

CONCLUSION | Empowering Transformation Through Local Leadership

Theme: *Lasting transformation requires more than insight—it demands godly character, cultural wisdom, and courageous leadership. The most effective change agents are those who understand their context and serve with integrity.*

Grounding Scripture

2 Timothy 2:2 – *"Entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also."*

Exodus 18:21 – *"Select capable men… men who fear God, trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain."*

1 Peter 5:2–3 – *"Be shepherds of God's flock… not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples…"*

Puzzle Piece

INSIGHT: Cross-cultural work is never simple. Hidden challenges—linguistic, relational, historical—can hinder even the best intentions. The puzzle of transformation must be completed by those who know the territory (their culture and society) and carry the heart of Christ.

CHALLENGE: Foreign workers may bring resources and vision, but national leaders bring relational access and cultural fluency. Empowering them is not optional—it's essential.

Bridge Thought | Connection

- The bridge to transformation is built by local leaders who embody godly character and understand their people.
- They speak not just the language—but the heart language of their communities.

Toolbox | Practical Tools

Leadership Identification: Find those with integrity, humility, and cultural insight.

Empowerment Strategy: Equip national leaders to lead transformation from within.

Cross-Cultural Awareness: Train outsiders to listen, learn, and support without control.

Reflection Prompts

1. Where have you seen cultural barriers hinder good intentions?
2. Who are the national leaders in your context that God may be raising up?
3. How can you empower others without imposing your own framework?

Action Steps

- Invest in local leadership development with humility and trust.
- Encourage national believers to lead with courage and biblical conviction.
- Use the appendix in the book to explore practical ideas for implementing change through godly character.

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