

Solving The Puzzle of Development

How Transformed Hearts and Minds can Change the World.

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? And, 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 byproduct. 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.



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 7 – 11]

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.