



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 is 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 fundamentally 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.

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 8:18–20 | *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.

Bridge Thought | 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? (**I added a verse below to support this thought)
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.

**Colossians 1:19–20, “For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile all things to himself, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.” “All things” (ta panta in Greek) is intentionally broad: creation, humanity, spiritual realms, relationships, systems, nothing is outside the reach of Christ’s redeeming work.

