



PROJECT:

TRANSFORMATION

TEXTBOOK

ABSTRACT

What would happen if the church is seen as the center of community development?

What changes when the church becomes the primary source of help for a village or community in symphony with government and non-government resources?

What if addressing need is not merely a gateway to evangelism, but the embodiment of what the church is meant to be?

This course prepares the student to live out the holistic mission of Christ, to enjoy an all-consuming love for God, and to express corresponding self-sacrificing love for our neighbors in every village and city.

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All quoted verses in this textbook are from the English Standard Version (ESV) Bible, unless otherwise noted, and taken from www.biblegateway.com.

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Welcome to Project: *Transformation*

Ø [Click here to watch video.](#)

Peter and I sat together near the dining hall table, encompassed on either side by other former students of mine. The fellowship during the evening meal was an extension of the special reunion that had started only two hours earlier. I had traveled back to Kenya for the purpose of reconnecting with students I had taught twenty years before as dean of a theological seminary situated high among the tea fields of Limuru. Peter is an exceptional and insightful Maasai who graduated with a Diploma in Theology and has gone on to earn advanced theological degrees. He is a leader among his village elders. As we laughed while reminiscing over a traditional meal, conversation shifted to my purpose for returning after all these years. Peter asked probing questions related to the subject at hand: What must be done to finish the task of reaching the unreached peoples of East Africa? He pressed the issue and stated that from his perspective, the churches that have been planted in Maasai land are seen by many in the villages as irrelevant. Peter explained that many villagers see the church as a Sunday place of worship and preaching, but when they have a need during the week, they turn to either the government or non-government organizations (NGOs) to meet their needs. For all practical purposes, the church is irrelevant to the average villager, particularly during a time of great need or crisis. Peter asked the question that my colleagues and I had journeyed so far to address: What would happen if the churches we plant among the least reached could be seen as centers of community development?

Peter's question is a vital one to be asked of every indigenous church plant, especially those started in areas of gripping need. What would happen if the church is seen as the center of community development? What changes when the church becomes the primary source of help for a village or community in symphony with government and non-government resources? What if addressing need is not merely a gateway to evangelism, but the embodiment of what the church is meant to be? One undeniable result of a paradigm shift toward holistic mission is that the church is seen as relevant to all of village life, and that changes everything. Our goal is not to plant churches that are culturally relevant; our goal is to live out the holistic mission of Christ, to enjoy an all-consuming love for God, and to express corresponding self-sacrificing love for our neighbors in every village and city. Relevance follows identification. When we actively identify with the compassionate person of Christ who healed individuals and grieved over estranged people groups, the result is undeniable relevance of the church of our Lord Jesus Christ. Holistic mission produces a relevant church.

This training will not tell you how to secure a salary nor will it tell you of a faster way to buy a plot of land or put a metal roof on your church. This training is about learning how to live as the people of God and thereby be agents of transformation—in every sense of the word.

A Journey of Discovery to Integral Mission

DEVOTIONAL

“The closer we come to Jesus, the better we will know his thirst.” — Mother Teresa

Ø Scripture for meditation: John 4:1-14

Jesus met a Samaritan woman in an unlikely place, at an unexpected time, and in a culturally radical way. In the end, she found what she had never dared to seek—Living Water that would never evaporate but would quench every ounce of thirst in her life.

Studying as well as doing holistic missions is much harder work than it appears prior to heading out on the journey. You will likely enter this study with a fair number of preconceptions—some helpful, others not as helpful. This study will cause you to come to recognize and navigate those preconceptions. You will be forced to face fears that will be as real as any you have ever experienced. You will have conversations with persons whose needs were previously masked or undetected. You will deal with issues of eternity and be encouraged to examine carefully your own experience with Christ. In addition, you will likely engage this study while juggling other studies, work, family, etc. To put it bluntly, you will become physically, emotionally, and spiritually drained. The challenge will be how to not only manage the stress, but also how to remain optimistic, and to engage in a meaningful way with ideas, people, and difficulties you encounter along this journey.

Thirst is the first sign of physical dehydration and will become consuming if not satisfied. Thirst secures our survival, and in 100 plus temperatures it is a major health risk. Thirst demands we replenish the life-giving water our bodies need to operate. No other liquid satisfies like water. Our bodies require between ten and twelve, sometimes more, glasses of water a day under these conditions. Spiritual thirst has much the same function as physical thirst, but its urgency is often overlooked. A healthy soul requires spiritual water the same way the physical body requires water. In difficult times and in emotionally draining situations, your soul will require much more spiritual water. And like the physical body's craving hydration, your soul will crave time alone with God and life-giving encouragement from the Bible. During the last hours of Jesus' life, He called out His thirst. The Roman soldier gave Him bitter wine, but I think it was spiritual water our Lord was seeking—a pain-bracing gulp of God's love to help Him endure what He had been born to suffer. He did what He had learned to do during His ministry on earth—He went to God for His immediate need.

When your soul begins to become dehydrated, spiritual water is available to nourish your spirit when you turn to your Father and other support people on your team. Devotion time becomes an oasis for the soul when you open your heart and mind to God through the Scriptures and reflection questions. In prayer, selected reading, lectures, and devotionals you will come to the well, and just as He gave to the Samaritan woman, Jesus will give to you the life-giving water you so desperately need to stay spiritually and emotionally healthy. Communion with the Father combined with diligent study and meaningful communication with fellow classmates and your

course instructor will become an artesian well for the soul during these challenging days. So, come to the Well and drink deeply of all God has prepared for you.

Prayer: *“Loving Father, I acknowledge my damaging bent toward self-sufficiency. Through this study, remove the blinders in place that prevent me from seeing and experiencing Your all-sufficiency. Allow me to see myself as You see me, and to view all others as You view them. Be to me an unending source of refreshment and holy wisdom. Create in me a clean heart, and as I grow in knowledge and devotion, cause to rise from within me a grand passion for others to know You—a loving, righteous, merciful God. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”*

Personal Stories of Discovery

Ø [Click here to watch video.](#)

Dane’s Story

It may be helpful for me to share my own story of my slow journey of discovery of holistic church planting. That story begins with my first cross-cultural experience in South Korea at the age of seventeen. I came to faith in Christ under the ministry of our family’s local church in Port Arthur, Texas, and grew up learning that local church ministry is focused on proclaiming the Gospel and leading others to faith in Jesus Christ. As a teenager, I was exposed to various training methods all focused on Gospel proclamation, and my early efforts in preaching, beginning at the age of sixteen, were in keeping with that emphasis.

A year later, at age seventeen, I traveled with a mission team from my church to Seoul, South Korea, where we went from home to home sharing our testimony of salvation and held evangelistic meetings each night for the purpose of proclaiming the Gospel. This was my first cross-cultural experience, and it opened my eyes and heart to sharing the hope of Christ with people of a culture and language that was quite different from my own. I returned to South Korea two years later where I did similar work of evangelizing from house to house and preaching evangelistic messages each evening. God did an amazing work during that time, and it was on that mission to Kwang Ju, South Korea, that I sensed that God had gifted me and was calling me to invest my life in cross-cultural evangelism and church planting. I returned to my home in Texas, and adjusted my college, and later seminary, education to prepare for cross-cultural evangelism and church planting.

While preparing for a career of cross-cultural evangelism and church planting, I served as pastor of several small churches in the United States. My focus as pastor was reaching the lost for Christ and leading my churches to grow numerically. God blessed those efforts, which led me to place even higher priority on evangelizing the lost and building churches. Eventually, I was appointed with the International Mission Board (IMB) as a church planting missionary. The Mission Board’s motto and my particular assignment was “evangelism that results in churches.” My first assignment was to Meru, Kenya.

Upon arriving in Meru, I immediately began to look for ways to spread the Gospel to areas where we had few or no churches—areas like Tharaka, Isiolo, and places north of Isiolo throughout what was once called the “northern frontier” of Kenya. I did not find many other missionaries

stationed in Meru, but I did meet one from a different mission agency. His name was Mark Nicholas. In an early conversation, I asked Mark what he was doing to evangelize and plant churches, and his response startled me. He began sharing enthusiastically that he was working with pastors to help them learn a better way to raise chickens in order to meet their own needs and empower their people to do the same. Even though I did not voice my thoughts to him, I said to myself: "What a waste of time! Missionaries are not here to help people raise chickens. We are here to share the Good News of Jesus Christ and start churches among those who have not heard the life changing message of Christ." I resolved to congratulate Missionary Mark on investing his life and time with chickens, while I would invest my life and time in the far more vital work of proclaiming the Gospel.

At one point early in my time in Meru, I met a Baptist missionary by the name of Vaughn Ross. He lived and served among the Samburu tribe. He was one of the godliest men I had ever met, and his mission work focused on what he called, "appropriate technology." His efforts led in preparing a book entitled, *Let's Build Our Lives*. The book was a written expression of his effort to assist people in improving the quality of their lives using materials that were available to them. Vaughn was concerned with meeting the practical needs of people, so that the Gospel may be more effectively presented to and lived out among them.

About the same time, I met Mark and Vaughn and was challenged through them to consider the importance of helping meet the needs of people while sharing the Gospel with them, I was introduced to the work of missionaries who were attempting to take the Gospel to Muslim-dominated areas north of Kenya. They did so under the name of "international development and relief." These missionaries strongly desired to lead people to faith in Christ and gather them into New Testament churches, but they recognized that in order to do so, they would need to address the critical needs of people who were literally starving to death in war-torn regions of Africa. Their radical sacrifice and faithfulness to their calling, combined with their concern for the practical needs of people, forced me to re-examine my own efforts in evangelism and church planting. For the first time in my life, I began to ask questions similar to the following: "How do we share the hope we have in Christ with those whose lives are in shambles and who are in need of the most basic human necessities like clean water, adequate food, and good health?" and "Why should anyone consider the message of Christ Good News, when there is no end in sight to their own suffering?"

As I wrestled with growing concerns about evangelism and church planting that ignores or, at the very least, fails to recognize the urgency of addressing humanitarian needs, I was asked by denominational leaders to visit Marsabit and lead the effort to evangelize and plant churches among the unreached Borana of northern Kenya. On my first visit to the area, I was brought face-to-face with the hardship associated with living in a barren land. People were hungry. Food was in short supply. Water sources were few and far between, and what water was accessible was unclean and disease-ridden. Very little medical care was available. I wanted to share the love of Jesus Christ with the Borana but found I could not do so without addressing the very real needs so apparent. I quickly learned that evangelism done in isolation from recognizing and responding to humanitarian needs had caused the tribal leaders to distrust our efforts and created unnecessary barriers to the Gospel that would be difficult to overcome. Therefore, I began to treat the medical needs of the people, secure additional sources of food, and lead them to take steps to provide clean water for their villages. I began using the very things I had read and learned from the book written by Vaughn Ross, and the development techniques I had

learned from missionary Mark Nicholas. Through these efforts, I gained the trust of Tullu Boru, the aged village chief (I will discuss this relationship in greater detail later), and eventually saw the first Baptist churches planted among the Borana in the region of Marsabit. I learned that effective evangelism and church planting is done by sharing the love of Christ *while* demonstrating that love in meeting the needs of people.

Upon returning to the United States, I began teaching missions at a Christian university. Rather than teaching my students proclamation evangelism that is far removed from considering humanitarian needs, I began to formalize a way to express and teach what I began referring to as “holistic mission.” A number of different missionary statesmen and authors spoke into my growing understanding of what some term “holistic mission”, and others call “transformational development.” Later, I began working with Samaritan’s Purse, an international Christian relief organization, where I have had the privilege of learning and seeing holistic mission in action in many different contexts around the world. All of this has shaped me and brought me to the place where The Unfinished Task Network (UTN) may be a catalyst for holistic church planting that is thoroughly biblical and fulfills the Great Commandment (love God with all your heart, soul, strength) and the Great Commission (love your neighbor as yourself). If that does not quite sound like the Great Commission with which you are familiar, continue the course and you will encounter it more fully in our next session.

David’s Story

My story begins when my wife and I were appointed as career missionaries with the Foreign Mission Board (FMB) of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), now called the International Mission Board (IMB). We were appointed in 1994 to Kenya, where I served as the Executive Director of Brackenhurst Baptist International Conference Center (BBICC) located about thirty minutes outside of Nairobi, the country’s capital city, in a town called Tigoni. I held several missionary positions within the Baptist Mission of Kenya over the eleven years in country, including Strategy Coordinator for the East Asian Team, specifically working to reach the 1.3 million Asian Indian Hindu and Muslim people groups. This role started my journey of redefining my understanding of missions, but also church planting and sustainable development.

I entered missionary service with the traditional missions philosophy: the missionary learns the language and plants churches, and accomplishes this by building relationships and sharing Christ in order to develop a core group of people to start a church, then moves on to the next church plant in another area. There is nothing wrong with reaching people for Christ and starting a church in and of itself, but the way I was taught lacked one key element: developing believers with a heart for transforming communities in a holistic manner to meet the physical needs as well as the spiritual needs of the community. Without having this holistic approach, the church is limited in its transformative impact.

I saw people struggling with physical needs such as poor living conditions, preventable health issues, food insecurity, lack of educational opportunity, and lack of access to legal and other resources necessary for sustainable improvement in the quality of life. Although I was happy to have been able to address the spiritual needs of people by teaching them about having a relationship with Christ, I noticed that the church was seen as impotent in its impact with the daily struggles of individuals and families. In short, the church was irrelevant. To be relevant, the church needed to take back the role it had abdicated to the government and nonprofit

organizations, and that role was to be the center of the community, helping to meet the physical needs of the local population.

Fast forward to when the Mission asked that I take the role of Logistics Coordinator for the IMB's Northern Frontier Cluster work, charged with reaching those unreached people groups in the civil war and political unrest areas of Northern Uganda and Southern Sudan. Over time, I was given the responsibility to cover the Strategy Coordinator role for the work while another missionary family went on stateside assignment for six months. It was during the time I was filling both roles in Southern Sudan that I became fully aware of the role the IMB, other nonprofits, and the United Nations (UN) programs were playing in perpetuating a culture of dependency in the region. While we thought we were helping, and perhaps we were in the short run, instead we were collectively contributing to undermining any hope for sustainable development. Every organization was doing their own thing, duplicating resources, wasting valuable financial and human resources by not developing high quality partnerships that were committed to working together to help make a lasting sustainable transformation in the lives of these unreached peoples. When project funding ended, organizations would pack up and go somewhere else where funding was available. All the while the people they had been working with were left without much needed medicine, education, food, and necessary training to carry on meeting their physical needs caused by war, famine, drought, and disease. This is when I became convinced that we had failed the people we were supposed to be helping.

Upon my family's return to the United States in 2005 due to some familial health issues, I was invited to meet with the University of Oklahoma's Public Service Institute (PSI) to discuss my impressions on sustainable development in these under-resourced and undeveloped areas of the world. I gave my opinion on how the international nonprofit community and the UN had been part of the problem instead of being part of the solution to meet the physical needs of the global community. I was asked if I would be willing to share my thoughts at the UN, which I did a few months later. I noticed when I was there that everyone was more concerned with promoting their program, writing and publishing theoretical works on how to help, writing project grants, etc., all of which had the primary purpose of protecting and perpetuating their own self interests. When asked what I believed the solution was, my response was that everyone involved in international development has to collectively work together and combine resources, all in the context of high-quality partnership to meet the needs of communities without being concerned with who gets the credit. Involving the faith-based community in these areas of great human need is crucial for long term sustainability. The church needs to be the center of every community, driving the collaborative efforts of partnership entities to help the local population understand what assets they have available to meet the most pressing needs of the community first without automatically asking for global financial and program help. The church is the perfect place to come together for recognizing the needs of the community, as it is made up of members of the community itself. The outside organizations involved in the development partnership should be there to train local indigenous leadership, who already have the necessary language and cultural knowledge, to meet both the spiritual and physical needs of the community through Asset-Based Development in tandem with church planting.

Over a period of sixteen years following my initial meeting with the University of Oklahoma's PSI, I have shared this message annually with UN leadership and global development agencies at the InfoPoverty World Conference at the United Nations headquarters in New York City, New York through a nonprofit I started called Affecting Change International (ACI)

www.affectingchange.org and later as part of the Unfinished Task Network (UTN)
www.unfinishedtask.org.

The Call of the Local Church

DEVOTIONAL

“The Word of God and religiously obeyed is the shortest route to spiritual perfection. And we must not select just a few favorite passages to the exclusion of others. Nothing less than the whole Bible can make a whole Christian.” — A. W. Tozer

Ø Scripture for meditation: Joshua 24:2

Many believers refer to themselves as “New Testament Christians,” while others describe themselves as “people of the Book.” Which is correct? Are we defined by New Testament teaching alone, or does the entire Bible shape our faith and practice, including sharing our faith in Christ? On one trip to Nigeria, Robert G. Tuttle, Jr., Professor Emeritus of Evangelism at Asbury Theological Seminary, encountered several indigenous churches whose teachings rely primarily upon the Old Testament. The Cherubim and Seraphim Churches and the Churches of the Lord Aladura are examples of a repeatable pattern: The churches apply Old Testament teachings to the sociocultural worldview of the African peoples. Tribal Africa relates easily to the tribal nature of Jewish culture, and this may be seen throughout the continent. For Nigerians, the religious elements found in the Old Testament have their equivalence in Yoruba traditional religions. Apart from their belief in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, these two churches claim to pattern themselves on their understanding of Judaism, particularly in the areas of community, morality, diet, demon possession, and spiritual warfare. In light of some tendencies toward syncretism, Tuttle asks if these churches would benefit from a better understanding of the New Testament, and his answer is “Undoubtedly.” Could they do with an understanding that the Gospel can be found in the Old Testament? Again, he answers, “Unquestionably.” Would we be better disciples and more effective witnesses if we were able to see the whole Bible as telling a story of creation, fall, redemption, and restoration? Without a doubt.

As you approach this session on a biblical understanding of what it means to be “church”, it is a great opportunity to open your mind and heart to what has been on the heart of God from the beginning. When I see more clearly the purposes of God for all of humanity, I better discern His purposes for my own life. (Devotion inspired by an account in Robert G. Tuttle Jr.’s *The Story of Evangelism: A History of the Witness to the Gospel* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2006.)

Prayer: *“Father, I confess that I am far too nearsighted, and that the concerns that occupy most of my thinking are my own. Open my mind and heart to what You’ve had in mind from the very beginning for all of creation, and draw my heart to the unique role You have ordained for me. Root from my thinking and my praying that I am less or more than what You created me to be. As Bob Pierce once prayed, ‘Break my heart for the things that break Yours.’ Take the broken pieces and reassemble them into a whole that honors You and leads me to love the nations as You do. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”*

Ø [Click here to watch video.](#)

Definition of Church

Everything I have done since I entered vocational Christian ministry at the age of twenty has related to the work of local churches—pastor, missionary, theological educator, college professor, and international relief worker. I love the Church and have sought to plant and strengthen local expressions on four continents. The most common visible expression of Christianity is the local church, but many are hard-pressed to define her. What is “church?” Offered automatically without thinking but with an “everyone knows that” expression, many people define church as “a body of baptized believers.” But what does that mean? That so-called definition speaks more to what qualifies you to be a member of a church than it offers anything about what a church is. Tragically, some pour themselves into planting churches with only a vague understanding of what it means to be and do church. Fortunately for all of us, Scripture speaks to the nature of the church in descriptive fashion.

Ø Read Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-37.

The Book of Acts is our one book of history in the New Testament and gives us our clearest snapshot of what life was like in the earliest churches. As we read Acts, we are careful not to take any single description and make it prescriptive, but if we see the same description repeated, we may have great confidence in drawing some conclusions/principles that we can apply today. The description of the earliest church in Acts 2 and 4 help us redefine the meaning of “church.” More than describing what churches do, we actually see what a church is. From what we read in the Book of Acts against the backdrop of the Old Testament, we can say that *a New Testament church is a prophetic community of faith*. While some may disregard this as a minimalist definition, each simple word holds profound meaning and is determinative in our approach to church planting.

I. A NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH IS PROPHETIC (Acts 2:43, 47)

“And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles.” (v. 43)

“...praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.” (v.47)

Even a cursory consideration of these verses will, at the very least, cause the reader to stumble upon the incredible impact this earliest church had on both those who were a part of the fellowship and those who were yet to be a part. Using deeply grounded biblical terminology, this may best be termed “prophetic” ministry. Widespread misunderstanding prevails concerning the biblical concept of prophecy and prophetic ministry. The Old Testament prophets were not primarily men and women who predicted the future; they were individuals who received a word from the Lord and proclaimed it with such boldness and relevance that people responded—sometimes they responded in repentance, while at other times they responded in anger and hostility, to the point of harming the prophet. But *no one remained unaffected and apathetic when a prophet spoke*.

The first element of being a church is being prophetic—that means serving as an agent of transformation in an unbelieving community, as well as within the believing community. *Truly being church brings about transformation*. A church without effect isn’t really a church.

I would like to encourage you to stop here and consider the following question: *If something unexpected happened overnight that caused your church to no longer exist, what difference would it make?* In other words, if your church no longer existed, what impact, if any, would that have upon your village or community?

Ø Pause to reflect.

Ø Write your response here.

If your honest answer to these two questions is, “nothing,” or “not much at all,” then your church is failing at this first vital point of identification. A church that brings about no transformation has ceased to be a New Testament church.

Although the explanation for any church failing to be prophetic/transformational may appear to be complex, the answer generally lies at the feet of an epic failure of the church attempting to implement The Great Commission without emulating the ministry of Jesus himself. In other words, the Church has become comfortable with a misplaced designation of The Great Commission. The most common place in Scripture referred to as the Great Commission is Matthew 28:18-20:

And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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.”

The serious problem with considering this directive as our sole marching orders for the Church is that it often leads to evangelism and church planting that ignores or disregards humanitarian needs. Advocates of this view may go so far as to speak negatively of acknowledging human needs as the “social gospel.” Granted, there are those churches that seek to address humanitarian issues with no thought to the spiritual condition of the people, but did Christ really envision the Great Commission as consisting of one or the other? To answer that question, it is helpful to look back at what is commonly called “The Great Commandment.” It is found in Luke 10:25-28:

And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" He said to him, "What is written in the Law? How do you read it?" And he answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself." And he said to him, "You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live."

What follows is Jesus telling the story of the Good Samaritan in response to the law expert's question: "Who is my neighbor?"

Ø Read Luke 10:29-37.

A Common Story with a Surprise Ending

Jesus casts the story in a familiar place, the road from Jerusalem down to Jericho. You physically descend when traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho—it is a 4,000 foot drop over just under thirty kilometers. The pass was known as the pass of *Adummim*, which we find in Joshua 18:17. *Adummim* is closely related to the Hebrew word for "blood." It was a "bloody pass," a journey in a very dangerous place. According to the story Jesus tells, a certain man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho and the predictable happened—he fell among robbers. A group of highwaymen pounced on the man, and they didn't just rob him: they stripped him; they took everything from him. They stripped him and left him virtually naked, and then they beat him. The term for "beat" here conveys the idea of repeated blows. They pummeled him and left him half-dead. We would say today he was in critical condition; he was in the process of dying and was already halfway there. Obviously, the victim in the story was in desperate need for help, finding himself in this kind of condition on a lonely road. There could be a lengthy amount of time that passed before anybody came along, and there was no guarantee that someone would find him or help him.

After the man was beaten, robbed, and left to die by the side of the road, along came three men, and the point of Jesus' story is how each of them responds to this poor man in his time of extreme need. Jesus then introduces a little bit of hope in the story. He says in verse 31, "*Now by chance a priest was going down on that road...*" This appears on the surface to be the best of news. Here comes a priest, a servant of God, one who offered sacrifices for people in the temple, one who lifted the people up before God, one who was to be a paragon of spiritual virtue, the best of men, the godliest, the righteous, the personification of virtue. He would be the ideal helper, because he would know the Old Testament law:

- He would know that Leviticus 19:34 says that if you see a stranger in need, you do whatever it takes to meet his need.
- He would know Exodus 23:4-5 that says if you find your enemy's donkey in a ditch, you make sure you rescue the man's donkey, let alone the man.
- He would know the wonderful words of the prophet Micah, who said on behalf of God in 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?*" He would have known what God expected of him. He would have known that judgment would be merciless to the one who didn't give mercy.

And so, with just that little opening remark, “*Now by chance a priest was going down that road,...*” we might have reason for hope. However, it is short lived because immediately Jesus said, “*...and when he saw him he passed by on the other side.*” Jesus uses a verb only used here in that verse and the next verse that has in it the word “*anti*” to strengthen it. *The priest literally went the opposite direction.* He saw the helpless man and chose to go in the opposite direction. The same decision was made when a Levite came to the place and saw the man in need.

The first two possible helpers were religious people—a Jewish priest and a rabbi. They knew God’s Word. They held positions of authority in the synagogue. People looked up to them as leaders, and yet what did they do when they saw the critically injured man lying on the roadside? They “*...passed by on the other side.*”

The third man—not a religious professional like the priest and rabbi, not even Jewish but a native of Samaria—stopped. Why? Because, Jesus says, “*...and when he saw him, he had compassion.*” Now, as you might already know, the Samaritans and Jews were longtime, sworn enemies, but not only did the Samaritan in Jesus’ story feel compassion for the Jewish man barely clinging to life, he also got involved. He took immediate action to help. Notice carefully what mercy looks like in our story.

Mercy in Three Dimensions

1. Mercy refuses to blink and turn away (v. 33). The Samaritan saw the wounded man, but didn’t turn his face away from the ugly sight.
2. Mercy reacts internally with a heart of compassion (v. 33). Compassion means to feel the hurt or pain of another.
 - First of all, the Good Samaritan saw him, and then he felt compassion. This is where it all begins. Something in his heart went out to the man: a sadness, a grief, a sympathy-empathy pain, a driving need to rescue and recover the man.
 - Compassion is the root of intercession. Sadly, many well-meaning Christians stop here.
3. Mercy responds externally with a practical effort to relieve distress (vv. 34-35).
 - Verse 34 says, “*He went to him....*” It simply means he went up to where the injured man was. He evaluated, assessed his condition, his need, and gave careful attention to what would be required for his rescue and recovery.
 - He discovered that the man had some wounds, which indicates he was probably bleeding—the Greek word used here is “trauma.” He likely had some broken bones. We don’t know because Jesus doesn’t put that in the story, but we do know he had been pummeled and beaten and wounded. And so it says that after he came to him, he bandaged up his wounds. Since the victimized man was naked, this meant the Samaritan started tearing up his own clothes—if not the ones he was wearing, then perhaps extras he carried in his travel bag—and he started

- putting a tourniquet on the man in places where he was bleeding. Next he generously washed the man with wine and oil.
- *"Then he set him on his own animal...."* The man was unable to get on his beast so the Samaritan picked him up and placed him over the back of perhaps a donkey or a mule so that he could get him somewhere he could get some food and water, care and rest.
 - This description of care is amazing. This is not minimal care. This is maximum compassion. Compassion led him to come and examine, to bandage up wounds. Compassion led him to pour oil and wine on his body and put him on his own beast.
 - The Samaritan took the beaten man to an inn, walked beside his donkey, held the man to make sure he didn't fall. Then Jesus said, *"...and took care of him."* Having negotiated the place to stay, the Samaritan took the man in, put him down to rest, and continued to work with his bandages, his wounds, and provided food, sleep, comfort, water, cleansing.
 - *"And the next day..."* He stayed with him all night. He set his whole agenda aside, gave up his own clothes, his own supplies, his own time. This is amazing for a stranger who was his worst enemy. But that wasn't all.
 - Look at verse 35: *"And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take care of him....'"* Wanting to continue on his journey, he now put him in the care of an innkeeper and left enough money to cover sixty-four days' room and board. These men had never before met; they were complete strangers. The Samaritan man didn't know how the Jewish man had come to be in the condition he was in, nor did he ask how he got into that condition—it didn't matter. All that mattered was that there was a man whose heart was so full of love that when somebody came across his path, there was never a question of qualification. There was never the question, "Is he my neighbor or is he not?" The only issue was, "How may I love that man to the full extent of his need?"
 - And that's not all. He said to the innkeeper in verse 35, *"Take care of him and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back."* The Samaritan exposed himself to serious extortion—he left an open account.

Christianity Is a Verb, Not a Noun

What are we to say and how are we to respond in light of this story?

"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy." (Mt. 5:7)

The word Jesus uses for "merciful" in Matthew 5:7 is the same word used in the Greek Old Testament to translate the Hebrew word for God's character. The basic meaning is to give help to the afflicted, and to rescue the helpless. *It is compassion in action.*

Jesus makes it clear to us that *mercy is love that does something*. Jesus is not speaking of detached or powerless sentiment that is unwilling or unable to help those who are in need. This is not some passive, silent concern, which, though genuine, is unable or unwilling to give tangible help.

Scripture has a lot to say about those who are in need—the poor, the oppressed, the marginalized, the discriminated against. In fact, did you know that more than 560 verses from Genesis through Revelation deal with the responsibility of God’s people to the poor and oppressed? Listen to four of them:

Whoever oppresses a poor man insults his Maker, but he who is generous to the needy honors him. (Prov. 14:31)

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

...if you pour yourself out for the hungry and satisfy the desire of the afflicted, then shall your light rise in the darkness and your gloom be as the noonday. (Isa. 58:10)

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? (1 John 3:17)

God has a heart for the poor, and He wants us to have one, too. More than that, like the Good Samaritan, He wants us to move beyond having a heart for the poor and feeling pity for their condition to taking action on their behalf—in His name. He wants us to be His hands and feet and voice for those in need. Theologian John Stott put it this way: “The perspective of Scripture is not the survival of the fittest, but the protection of the weakest.” Mercy happens even when the person in distress is, by religion and/or race, an enemy. In this story, a half-breed Jewish man with a warped religious tradition stopped to help a Jew who hated him.

So, what message did Jesus want to drive home? Remember, He told this story to answer the lawyer’s question, “Who is my neighbor?” Another way of posing the question is, “Who am I responsible for?” What is the answer?

Ø Read verses 36 and 37 again.

“Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?” He said, “The one who showed him mercy.” And Jesus said to him, “You go, and do likewise.”

Jesus ended His conversation with the lawyer with a powerful command: Go and do likewise. That command—“*You go and do likewise*”—rings through the centuries and lands squarely on our shoulders today. Make no mistake—the mandate to love our neighbor as ourselves is just as much the responsibility of God’s people today as it was 2,000 years ago. But just like 2,000 years ago, the question for us today is, “Who is our neighbor?” The parable of the Good Samaritan gives us the answer, and it is simple—like the man on the side of the road, our neighbor is anyone in need who we are in position to help. How do we practice mercy? We practice mercy through physical acts, as did the Good Samaritan. We practice mercy by fulfilling what Jesus described as His own mission: feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the sick, visit the imprisoned, and give any other practical help needed.

When you read this story, be sure not to miss the absolutely compelling imperative at the conclusion in verse 37—Jesus commands, “*You go and do likewise.*”

Give consideration to the following re-understanding of the Great Commandment and the Great Commission from Luke 10:

- The Great Commandment—A radically reoriented life around Christ as our Center.
- The Great Commission—A radical expression of living the Christ life for the benefit of those we are able to help.

Failure to connect Matthew 28:18-20 with Luke 10:29-37 is to miss the point. Choosing the wrong starting line is like laying bricks and getting off course. Christ’s Great Commission is, “*You go and do likewise.*” The “go” of Matthew 28 builds on this clarion call in Luke 10 to express mercy in Jesus’ name.

II. A NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH IS A COMMUNITY (Acts 2:42, 44, 46)

“And they devoted themselves to....the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayers.” (v. 42)

“And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts.” (vv. 44-46)

That is community! There is a terrible misnomer today. People say they “attend church,” but if the Book of Acts is giving us an accurate portrayal of church, you cannot *attend* church, you can only *be* church! Church is not a place where strangers assemble to attend and enjoy a program; the Church is a living organism in which strangers become family, and family deals with the worst and brings out the best in each of us.

Community is built on the foundation of trust. Notice again our text. What is happening here? The church is meeting needs, which means the people with needs were not afraid to admit them openly. You will never trust people you don’t know; acquaintances are not members of a community. Trust flourishes in the fabric of grace. Those who have received grace extend grace to one another. It is unthinkable that those of us who have been saved by God’s grace, entirely by His work and choice, would extend judgment to one another. It may well be that the unbelieving community remains unbelievers and stays on the outside because they are afraid of judgment and condemnation. The world is waiting to be loved to Jesus. “The more genuine and the deeper our community becomes, the more will everything else between us recede, the more clearly and purely will Jesus Christ and his work become the one and only thing that is vital between us. We have one another only through Christ, but through Christ we do have one another, wholly, and for all eternity.” (Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*)

Effective life-transformation takes place in the context of community.

III. A NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH DISPLAYS A RADICAL FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST (v. 42a)

“And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching...” (v. 42a)

What were the apostles teaching? They were teaching Christ! They were reciting what they had heard and witnessed with their own eyes. They were describing their relationship with the Master. The early church was radically Christ-centered, and the result was radical discipleship.

Relationships are everything. That means that discipleship is the expression of transformation *within* the believing community. This relationship with Jesus Christ is a radical one.

Ø Read Matthew 10:34-39.

Theology does matter. For proof, one need look no further than the historical schism between evangelism and the so-called “social gospel.” The ebb and flow of this ongoing debate has infected church planting strategy and methodology. The remedy for this infection is a return to a biblical understanding of “church.” The “why” of holistic church planting is rooted in our understanding of “church.” When we redefine “church” and understand it as a prophetic community of faith, we are compelled to establish churches that are agents of transformation, both within the believing community and in addressing the needs of the surrounding context.

Asset-Based Transformational Development

DEVOTIONAL

This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.” (Josh. 1:8-9)

Ø Scripture for meditation: Joshua 1

Boniface (circa A.D. 675-754) was born an Anglo-Saxon from Crediton, England. He frequently wrote letters asking for assistance in preaching the Gospel in his adopted lands across the English Channel. We join Boniface as he completes a letter just prior to confirming a gathering of new believers in his beloved Frisia (present-day Holland):

I’ve been coming to these lowlands for nearly forty years. That’s half my life. Some see desolate swamps, but I see people in need of a Savior. They have given me lodgings and a place to pen my notes. On the table beside me I have my Bible, ever-present. I study it day and night to find strength and courage for the tasks at hand. My first journey to Frisia was the result of a *call*—forty years in the making. I remember telling my parents, “I want to be a monk.” Since they had better plans, they reluctantly allowed me to enroll in a nearby monastery, recently taken over by the English—actually Celts. I was a diligent student. Columba and Columbanus were my meat and drink. I am certain that it was there that I first caught the vision and developed the wanderlust. The call had begun. At the canonical age I was ordained and eventually offered an abbacy, which I refused. I had already learned of the work of Willibrord, here in Frisia. In the manner of the Celts, I traveled with twelve of my companions across the Channel. When we arrived, we found that the Frisian king, Radbod, had declared war on Christians—destroying monasteries and churches. After spending just the summer and making no converts, we returned to England. Undaunted, we determined that next time we would do better. For nearly two years we prayed, searched God’s Word, renewed our determination and courage, and set out again, this time for Rome. That was the last time I saw England. Once gaining the ear of the pope, I was given a commission. I was sent to Germany. Crossing the Alps, we went first to the churches in Bavaria. Finding them well established, we turned our attention north. After some success among the pagans, we heard that King Radbod had died in Frisia, and we journeyed west. Within days we were back in Frisia where we worked diligently to destroy pagan temples, build churches, and establish monasteries. Evangelism was our passion. Pagans were gathered, converted, and sent out to gather more. I was proud of them. Multitudes of Christians who had fallen away during the persecution of Radbod were brought to repentance, and thousands of pagans accepted the faith. Although my responsibilities and call has taken me abroad for many years, I have

now been back in my beloved Frisia for two years. It is not an easy life. Occasionally the Saxons raid our monasteries and burn our churches. My priests near the frontier with the pagans have a poor livelihood. Yet God's grace sustains an old man of nearly eighty. The fruit of our labors will be displayed in the blessed rite of baptism tomorrow. We've chosen a river, so there will be enough water for all. God knows there will be Spirit enough for all. Now I must pray.

The following day, June 5, 754, as Boniface and a group of about fifty were preparing for the baptisms, they were set upon by bandit Saxons and murdered. Boniface had been stabbed through his Bible, which he had instinctively raised to divert the blow. While dying he reportedly said, "My children, do not fight; let us follow the example of our Lord in Gethsemane. We shall soon see him in glory. I have longed to see him, and to be with him. Let us pray." In a very real sense the message was the man. Boniface was an evangelist. He was a man of the Book. The two characteristics seem to be inseparable. (From Robert G. Tuttle, Jr., *The Story of Evangelism: A History of the Witness to the Gospel* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2006), 161-167.)

Prayer: Even as Boniface prayed, with humility we ask that You grant wisdom and courage to escape the cunning snares of the evil one and the buffeting of evil men, that the Word of the Lord may prosper, and Christ be glorified. We long to know You through Your Word, so that we may make You known to those who have yet to hear and believe. We do not know what lies in store, but You do. Make us fit for all that You have prepared for us to endure for Your sake. Grant a passion to make You known among the nations and across the street. For Jesus' sake, Amen.

Ø [Click here to watch video.](#)

Transformative Mission

UTN's understanding of mission is best described as holistic or transformative mission. This is in contrast to the common practice throughout the world of distinguishing preaching from social action, separating church ministry from community transformation. We strongly believe that the Bible reveals that this is not the mission of Jesus. Instead, Christ's compassion was inseparable from His effort to seek justice for individuals. Compassion for the poor compelled Him to bring good news to them. Compassion for captives compelled Him to seek their release. Compassion for the blind compelled Him to return sight to them. Compassion for the oppressed compelled Him to enact deliverance on their behalf. UTN's calling is to equip church planters to initiate living, thriving, prophetic communities of faith that embody the Good News of God's mission in words, deed, and character in their own specific contexts. In this way, we cooperate with the mission of God in seeking whole-life transformation.

For too long, we have allowed the Church to appear irrelevant to the challenges and needs in our communities. Church has been seen as a place to attend on Sunday for singing and preaching, but to address real needs in the community, villagers either turn to the government or non-government organizations. While acknowledging that the Church is an imperfect institution, churches are the organizations with the greatest potential to reshape the lives of the communities where they are located.

The Church is called to unveil what it looks like to enjoy a relationship with God that transforms a whole life. We are called to be a caring, inclusive community that serves those in need. We are also called to explain why we live in that way. The way local churches express this will look different in various locations and contexts. It is for this reason we seek to equip church planters and church leaders in a *process* rather than a program.

Ø Read Ephesians 1:18-23; 5:25-30.

In the New Testament, God's people, the Church, are more than just a representation of Jesus. The Church is the body, bride, and very fullness of Jesus. When people look at the Church, they should see the One who declared—in word and deed to the leper, lame, and poor—that His kingdom is bringing healing to every part of God's creation. It is not enough for the Church to preach the Good News of the Gospel with the hope that people will come to hear it. Jesus wants us to disperse into our homes, villages, towns, and cities, to declare the Good News and to *be* Good News.

Ø Read Isaiah 58:5-12; 61:1-3.

We, as God's Church, are to be used for God's plan as He works to restore all people from the brokenness caused by sin to the transformation God intends for all of life. What, then, is God's plan for the Church? First, God's plan is that the Church itself be the bearer of God's image. Secondly, that the Church serves as God's agent of reconciliation and restoration. The Church is God's hands and feet to bring healing to our broken world.

Project: *Mabadaliko* seeks to equip a church planter or pastor to lead the church to see its mandate to reach out with an integral mission to the whole person; body, soul and spirit, and to be prepared to act within the community as well as from their church base, with a real understanding of the need to empower and develop people—offering a hand up rather than a handout. In turn, the church leader will lead the church to think positively about how it disciples, empowers, and develops people and communities, how it uses its resources, what challenges it faces, what it says “no” to (what it will not do), how and at what levels it engages with its society (who it partners with), and how it determines root problems and solutions.

Asset-Based Development

Asset-based development focuses on what people have rather than what they do not have. It doesn't ask them what they need. Asset-based development recognizes that God has blessed every person and community with gifts, such as land, social networks, animals, savings, intelligence, schools, creativity, production equipment, etc. An asset-based approach puts the emphasis on what people already have and asks them to consider, “What is right with you? What do you have that you can use to improve your life and that of your community?”

This approach to community development reinforces some very positive relationships:

- Relationship with God—God is just and has provided for us.

- Relationship with Self—God has given me talents and gifts; being able to work to take care of the needs of my family and others gives me dignity.
- Relationship with Community—Shared resources, shared intelligence, etc., improves our relationships with our neighbors because we are working together.
- Relationship with environment/creation—I have resources I can use; the community is valuable and has resources.

Ø Read Matthew 5:13-16.

The Continuum

In our research, we have identified three different ways of involving the community, in increasing levels of effectiveness.

1. Church working for the community

The church does the work itself, leads the process and makes decisions on what work the church will do in the community. Community members are there as beneficiaries only but have no involvement as decision makers nor do they sit on the committee. They are passive recipients.

2. Church working with the community

The church works closely with the community to affect change. The church begins as a facilitator and mobiliser of the community. Together, the church and community members form a committee and work to bring change in their community. The work is still done by the church and sits under the church leadership, but community members sit on the committee with church members, and together they decide how to move forward.

3. Church as catalyst in the community

The church is envisioned to get involved in their community. They mobilize and envision their community to get involved in transformation in their community. The role of the church is not as implementer; however, the church still plays a key role as catalyst and can also be involved in the work of the community. The church, therefore, plays a prophetic role in speaking into their community and getting people to transform their community, even as they release the work out into the community to do. The church's primary role is as a catalyst, with members from the church involved as community members in the work.

Research from Kenya has indicated that the more the community is involved, the greater the impact on the people targeted; the wider community and the church grow both numerically and spiritually. This is because when the church reaches out and walks in real relationships with others, people come to know the living, life-giving God. Also, as church members connect with more non-believers, their faith is strengthened and challenged.

Holistic Church Planting

DEVOTIONAL

“At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion of what was known as the Italian Cohort, a devout man who feared God with all his household, gave alms generously to the people, and prayed continually to God.” (Acts 10:1-2)

Ø Scripture for meditation: Acts 10

Deep in the hill country of Ethiopia live several million coffee growing people who share a common belief in an omnipotent and benevolent being called Magano. He is the omnipotent Creator of everything. These people are divided into different tribes, one of which is the Darassa or Gedeo people. Only a minority of the Gedeo actually pray to Magano. In fact, the people seem more concerned about appeasing an evil spirit called Sheit'an than they do Magano. When asked the reason, a group of Gedeo replied: “We sacrifice to Sheit'an, not because we love him, but because we simply do not enjoy close enough ties to Magano to allow us to be done with Sheit'an.” At least one Gedeo man did pursue a personal response from Magano. His name was WarrasaWange, and he was related to the Gedeo's royal family. He lived in a town called Dilla on the edge of Gedeo tribal land. His way of approaching Magano was through a simple prayer asking Magano to reveal himself to the Gedeo people. WarassaWange received an almost immediate response. He began to have visions of two white-skinned strangers erecting flimsy shelters for themselves under a large sycamore tree near Warrasa's home town. Then Warassa heard a voice saying, “These men will bring a message from Magano, the God you seek. Wait for them.” In the final scene of the vision, Warassa saw himself remove the center pole from his home. According to Gedeo symbolism, the center pole of a man's house stands for his own life. Warassa then carried the pole out of town and set it next to one of the dwellings of the strange men. Warassa understood the meaning of the vision—his life must become identified with the strange men and their message, and with Magano who sent them.

Warassa waited eight years for the vision to become a reality. After eight years had passed, on a hot day in December of 1948, Canadian missionary Albert Bryant and his colleague Glen Cain arrived in Gedeo land. Their mission was to begin work for the glory of God among the Gedeo people. They pulled up in their battered old international truck and parked under an old sycamore tree. Warassa first heard and then saw the old truck under the sycamore tree, and instantly began walking toward it. Three decades later, Warassa Wange had become a radiant believer in Jesus Christ, and there were more than 200 churches among the Gedeo people. Almost the entire tribe has been influenced by the gospel. (Taken from Don Richardson, *Eternity in Their Hearts* (Ventura, California: Regal Books, 1984), 54-56.)

Do you see any resemblance between Warassa Wange and the centurion Cornelius? If so, in what way(s)? Is your own heart tender and open to whatever the Lord would say to you? The Father has you in this course for a reason; take time right now to ask the Lord to enable you to discern clearly what He says to you as you study the session at hand.

Prayer: *“Father, I am convinced that You have directed me to take this course, and I do not want to miss anything that You have prepared for me. Enable me to recognize Your voice, and to see clearly where You are at work. Open my heart as well as my mind; this is my earnest plea. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”*

Dignity Now; Hope for Eternity

The presentation was interesting enough on its own merits, but I sat up and took notice of one particular statement. I was participating in a think tank gathered for the purpose of considering how best to move forward with development among refugee communities in light of past experience and predicted future trends. Our presenter reminded us of the minimum guidelines and accountability outlined and described in “The Sphere Project”, then moved on to consider specific humanitarian contexts. He provided personal examples, including his involvement in responding to the Syrian Refugee crisis. It was the moment he shared their vision statement from that response that gripped me and continues to hold my imagination captive. According to our speaker, they had been guided by this simple yet profound mandate: “Dignity Now; Hope for Eternity.”

I cannot conceive of a clearer description or mandate for what we hope to achieve in holistic church planting—restore dignity now, and instill hope for eternity through establishing prophetic communities of faith that embody the transforming Gospel of Jesus Christ.

1. We enter a village where a deeply troubling need persists.
2. We lead villagers to identify what resources are available in the community to resolve the need.
3. We help distinguish God’s Truths from lies in ownership of resources.
4. We practically train how to use chosen resources.
5. We introduce the life changing Gospel of Jesus Christ and organize converts into communities of faith.

In this way, human dignity is restored even as individuals and communities come to know and embrace the eternal hope found only in Jesus Christ. Holistic church planting embodies well the mandate: “Dignity Now; Hope for Eternity.”

The Nature of Man’s Greatest Need

“Too often in church planting we have relegated God’s transforming work to spiritual realities and assigned earthly matters to science and technology. The result is a schizophrenic Christianity that leaves everyday problems of human life to secular specialists and limits God to matters of eternity. A truly holistic approach to mission rooted in biblical truth is as essential in planting vital churches that remain Christ-centered over the generations as it is in Christian ministries of

compassion” (Paul G. Hiebert, Foreword to Bryant L. Myers’ *Walking With the Poor: Principles and Practices of Transformational Development*, 2011).

The idea of transformational development wedded to Christian witness is not a new concept. Myers sets forth clearly the idea of transformational development in his seminal work, *Walking With the Poor: Principles and Practices of Transformational Development* (Orbis Books, 2011). His use of the term reflects a deep-seated conviction that what we are to be about in entering people groups and communities is seeking change “in the whole of human life materially, socially, psychologically and spiritually.” Myers goes on to say that Christian witness is concerned with communicating that “God has, through his Son, made it possible for every human being to be in a covenant relationship with God.” Myers chooses to use the term “Christian witness” over “evangelism” because evangelism for him conjures up images of street evangelists broadcasting monologues loudly through megaphones, or crusade evangelists preaching passionately and persuasively to stadiums filled with people. Instead, he sees Christian witness as proclaiming the Gospel by “life, word, and deed.”

This brings us to what holistic mission is all about: restoration of relationships.

“God’s inherent nature is good. One of the ways this is shown in the Bible is through the central theme of justice and care for the poor in scripture. Consequently, poverty and oppression are symptoms of something fundamentally wrong in the relationship between God and humanity. The biblical narrative describes an arc of history starting from a life of wholeness in creation (Genesis 1 and 2) that was marred by the Fall (Genesis 3). The consequence was broken relationships—ultimately with God, but also with each other, with ourselves and with the whole of creation.” (Tearfund: “Understanding Poverty: Restoring Broken Relationships”).

A holistic approach to church planting seeks to restore peoples to proper and right relationships with God, with each other, themselves, and the world on which they depend.

“Poverty itself can be understood as a state caused by broken relationships—a broken relationship with God that causes us to be separated from Him and act contrary to His desire for our lives; a broken relationship with each other that causes us to ignore God’s desire for us to love one-another as we love ourselves; a broken understanding of ourselves, forgetting that we are made in God’s image, causing us to ignore God’s ways and be hard-hearted; and a broken relationship with the world in which we live, abusing the resources we are to be stewards of and with which we have been entrusted” (Stephen Gaukroger, Clarion Trust International).

Holistic church planting engages unreached people at their point of greatest need, namely the restoration of broken relationships:

- Broken Relationship with God—The consequence of Adam and Eve’s disobedience was that their relationship with God changed radically and they were expelled from the Garden (Gen. 3:8).

- Broken Relationship with Ourselves—God created men and women in His own image (Gen. 1:26), but after the Fall shame entered the human race (Gen. 3:7). Adam and Eve no longer understood themselves as God’s children.
- Broken Relationships with Others—In the Fall, the relationship of Adam and Eve was broken (Gen. 3:16). The natural harmony they enjoyed before the Fall was ruined, and injustice entered the world. The result of this was highlighted in the slaying of Abel by Cain (Gen. 4:1-8).
- Broken Relationships with God’s Creation—The relationship between human beings and God’s created environments was broken (Gen. 3:17). As a result, fruitfulness no longer comes easily to man. Men and women have to toil, with no guarantee of an equal return on their effort in working the land. Natural and manmade disasters are evidence of this broken relationship with God’s created order.

Holistic or transformational mission insists that our faith requires action in terms of the way we live and conduct our relationships. It demands we take seriously Christ’s admonition to love both God and our neighbor. According to Jesus, the motivation behind the messages of the Old Testament Prophets is based on this principle of reciprocating love. Holistic mission is nothing less than transformation resulting from all-consuming love for Christ and for those whom He has created in the *imago dei*.

“Poverty is the result of a social and structural legacy of broken relationships with God, a distorted understanding of self, unjust relationships between people, and exploitive relationships with the environment. These broken relationships not only affect individuals’ lives, decisions and actions, but also create broken systems, leading to problems such as power imbalances and corrupt governments. These fractures are made worse by conflicts and natural disasters, many of which also have roots in the broken relationships between God, humanity, and wider creation” (Anna Ling and Hannah Swithinbank, Tearfund).

The Role of Local Churches in Community Transformation

“The church occupies a distinct space in communities, nations and the world. It is privileged in its reach at all levels, connecting at the level of the individual right up to international organizations. This creates huge potential for its role in tackling poverty, in all its forms, across the globe” (Lucie Wooley, “Integral, Inspirational and Influential: The role of local churches in humanitarian and development responses,” Tearfund: 2017).

Christians are called to take intentional and strategic initiative in restoring broken relationships. Integral mission “understands that God is working to restore broken relationships by responding holistically to people’s needs, including economic, emotional, spiritual and physical ones. The church, as the body of Christ, therefore, has a distinctive role to play in fulfilling this mission” (Ling and Swithinbank, “Understanding Poverty: Restoring Broken Relationships,” Tearfund: 2019). Churches are by definition prophetic communities of faith. The response of UTN is to mobilize the planting of churches that are by nature and effect agents of spiritual and community transformation. The aim of transformational church planting is to restore all four different types of broken relationships. This approach goes beyond meeting basic needs, equipping churches

to enable and empower people to flourish as they come to know Christ individually and become agents of transformed relationships:

- Restored Relationship with God—Human flourishing depends on a living relationship with God the Father through Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit. Biblical *Shalom* is about being right with God through repentance and the forgiveness of sin. God's desire is that individuals, communities, and people groups respond to Christ's invitation of a restored relationship with Him, and love God with all their hearts, all their souls, all their minds, and all their strength (Luke 10:27). This response enables transformation by the power of the Spirit that is reflected in character, values, and behavior.
- Restored Relationship with Ourselves—This requires us to have the blinders removed so that we see ourselves as God sees us (Gen. 1:27; 1 Thess. 1:4), and bring our body, mind, soul, feelings, and will back in sync with that biblical identity. Only when we understand that we bear the image of God will we display Him to the world in all areas of life.
- Restored Relationships with Others—Restored relationships are characterized by love and respect in the face of obvious and implied differences, such as gender, race, culture, economic status, or religion.
- Restored Relationships with God's Creation—Living sustainably means caring for the whole of creation (Gen. 1:26; 2:15). This includes the physical environment, living creatures, and maintaining environmental resources like water, land, seeds, and air.

A Holistic Approach to Church Planting

∅ [Click here to watch video.](#)

A Case of Mistaken Identity

What we have seen historically in missions and church planting may be described as a case of mistaken identity. Beginning with wrongly identifying the Great Commission in Scripture has led us down a path that threatens to remove, or at least hide, the influence Christ intended for His Bride to have. This explains why it is difficult for us to understand His declaration about the Church in Matthew 16:18: "...*the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*" We have planted an evangelizing church rather than a transforming church. The result is a thin veneer of Christianity that leaves believers undeveloped and communities untransformed.

Consider the traditional approaches to evangelism and church planting that we have all witnessed, and perhaps even practiced. This approach includes open air preaching in public spaces, house-to-house evangelism, church services in which the pastor preaches essentially the same evangelistic message week-after-week, pastors being away from their home church doing evangelistic preaching in other locations, while various guests preach in their absence. These traditional approaches focus on proclamation and decision. They operate as distinct and

separate from the needs of the community. In fact, the needs of the community are actually irrelevant to this type of evangelism and approach to church planting.

Contrast and compare that with what we will term the “transformational (Biblical) approach” to evangelism and church planting, or what we often call “holistic” church planting. The transformation approach follows the instruction of Jesus in Luke 10 to the seventy-two that He sent out on mission. It is not coincidental that this instruction for mission appears in the same chapter in which we find the story of the Good Samaritan and the declaration of the Great Commandment and what we are calling the Great Commission. This church planting method described and prescribed by Jesus involves identifying a “Person of Peace” who leads in acknowledging and gathering community involvement for addressing significant humanitarian issues with an asset-based approach. This approach is effective because it operates within the framework of evangelism we see in the Book of Acts. That framework may be described by the Greek word *oikos*. In this way, the new church is integrated into the community from its beginning, which will allow it to be the center of transformation in the community or village. In other words, in a very real way the needs of the community provide the reason for the church existing as part of that community.

New Testament Framework for Holistic Church Planting

Oikos in the New Testament¹

If making disciples of all nations is God’s intent, we are compelled to ask, “What is the proper biblical posture for teaching the Gospel with the aim to persuade?” The activity of God’s people to share the Gospel should be in keeping with the nature of God Himself. God lives in a perpetual relationship with Himself—Father, Son and Holy Spirit. He created man in His own image, which must include the fact that man is a relational being. We were created to be in relationship with Him, and in relationship with others. In light of that, we should not be surprised to learn that New Testament evangelism is essentially an activity born of relationship. Evangelism in the New Testament is based upon the concept of *oikos*. According to Thayer’s *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, *oikos* has three primary meanings:

1. “a house,” which may mean “an inhabited house,” “any building whatever,” or “any dwelling place”;
2. “the inmates of a house, all the persons forming one family, a household”;
3. “stock, race, descendants of one.”

In common general Greek usage, *oikos* means “house” or “dwelling,” but *oikos* may also mean “family” or “household.” The latter uses are most common in Scripture and common language expression. *Oikos* is found frequently in the Septuagint and generally denotes “family” or “race.” The Christian community itself is called the *oikos tou theou* and the *oikos pneumatikos* in the New Testament. “In the OT ‘my house’ refers to Israel itself, so that the NT exegesis reminds us of the equation of ‘house of God’ and the community.” Christians are fitted into the *oikos pneumatikos* as living stones (*lithoizōntes*). “Distinctive Hebrew modes of expression explain the fairly common NT phrase ‘house of Israel’” with the reference being to the whole people or race

¹ This material comes from a dissertation written in 2005 by Dane Fowlkes, Ph. D.; *A Church Planting Movement in India*.

of Israel. The final usage of *oikos* described by Friedrich is “The ‘house’ as a group in the structure of the Christian community”:

Primitive Christianity structured its congregations in families, groups and “houses.” The house was both a fellowship and a place of meeting. Thus we read of the house of Stephanas in 1 Corinthians 1:16, the house of Philemon in Philemon 2, the house of Cornelius in Acts 11:14, the house of Lydia in Acts 16:15, the house of the prison governor in Acts 16:31, 34. Acts 18:8 also refers to the faith of Crispus and his whole house. It is also likely that the house of Onesiphorus in 2 Timothy 1:16; 4:19 is a house fellowship of this kind. In this regard we read expressly in Acts 2:46 that they broke bread by house (*kat’ oikon*), and the summary in Acts 5:42 says that they taught and proclaimed the good news in the temple and in houses (*kat’ oikon*). It is explicitly emphasized that the conversion of a man leads his whole family to the faith; this would include wife, children, servants and relatives living in the house.

The primary New Testament use of *oikos* conveys the idea of one’s extended sphere of influence and is usually translated, “household.” “Greco-Roman political writers understood the household to be the basic building block of the state. Cities, they observed, are composed of households.” Secular ethicists believe the stability of the city-state to largely depend upon responsible management of the *oikos* or household:

The foundational nature of this institution is further seen in the pattern it provided for the structure and definition of larger political institutions. The emperor came to be viewed as a father and the state as his household. And many functions or positions in relation to the state were derived from the “household” root.

In keeping with the understanding of *oikos* as denoting a household, some writers specified “household” in terms of three relational pairs: husbands and wives, fathers and children, and masters and slaves:

If by our word family we usually understand a group of husband, wife, and children, we may acknowledge at once that it does not correspond exactly to any of the meanings of the Latin *familia*, varied as the dictionaries show these to be. . . . Those persons made up the Roman *familia* in the sense nearest to its English derivative, who were subject to the authority of the same Head of the House.

Members of a household commonly included all the property (real and persons) belonging to the head of the household. At the center of every sphere of influence was a key individual. The head of each household (*pater familiās*) legally held full authority over the individual elements of the household, but in practical terms the unity of the *oikos* depended more upon “the sense of loyalty to the household which stemmed more directly from common economic, social, psychological and religious factors. The household provided members with a sense of security and identity that the larger political and social structures were unable to give.” An *oikos* then is a social network derived from and identified in relation to a certain head of the household. The members of each *oikos* relate to one another through family ties and/or common tasks.

The Apostle Paul's concept of church and evangelism cannot be adequately understood or explained apart from noting his own understanding of and use of the *oikos* concept. As in the definition of the word itself, there are numerous uses of *oikos* in Paul's writings. In one sense, Paul uses the term to refer to the place where believers met for worship. This reflects the historical reality that early Christians left the Temple and synagogues in favor of meeting in the homes of certain believers. When Paul refers to churches (*ekklēsia*), he most likely is referring to "house churches." This is an appropriate image for Paul as he speaks of God's people in relation to God and one another. For example, in 1 Timothy 3:15, Paul describes the Church at Ephesus as the "household of God" (*oikos theou*). The members of the household find identity and commonality under the leadership of the head of the household. Being a member of a certain *oikos* provided identity as well as the security that accompanied a sense of belonging.

Paul's concept of *oikos* in relation to that of *ekklēsia* also dictated his practice of ministry within the church:

The dominance of the household concept in Paul's thought also influenced his perception of the ministry and the minister. Paul's ministry thus comes under the category of stewardship (*oikonomia*, 1 Corinthians 9:17; Colossians 1:25), that is, a task entrusted by the master to a member of the household. The one who receives this trust, the minister, is called a "steward" (*oikonomos*, 1 Corinthians 4:1, 2; Titus 1:7). Such a description emphasizes the need for faithful execution of duties and accountability to the master.

Paul's primary interest was not in evangelizing individuals, but in forming Christian communities composed of *oikos* groups meeting together occasionally. Archaeological evidence reported by J. Murphy-O'Connor confirms that the average size of a household was fifty, making it likely that believers met most often as subgroups in smaller numbers. According to D. J. Tidball in his article "Social Setting of Mission Churches":

The individualism of contemporary Western society would have been quite foreign to the way of thinking in Paul's day. Decisions would have been taken corporately, or more probably, by the leading member of the household on behalf of others. Hence, we read of household conversions and baptisms (Acts 16:15, 31-34; 18:8; 1 Corinthians 1:16). When such a joint decision was taken it would not necessarily call forth equal acceptance, commitment or understanding by all who were involved. Negatively, the existence of various house churches in any one town would lead to a tendency to division; with one house fellowship owing allegiance to one teacher and others to different teachers. It may be that this is the situation underlying Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 1:10-17. Positively, the household was ready-made to serve as the "basic cell" of the church and the primary unit for mission as it used its existing network of relationships outside its own membership to spread the gospel.

Oikos and New Testament Evangelism

Luke gives prominence in the *Book of Acts* to the idea and practice of *oikos*. Luke uses the word *oikos* eighty-seven times in his two-volume work, most often in conjunction with Christian conversion, a few of which are listed below:

- Zaccheus responded to Jesus, and was told, *"Today salvation has come to this house"* (Luke 19:9).
- Paul taught people according to households (Acts 20:20).
- Cornelius feared God along with all of his household, and he received a promise that he and his household were saved (Acts 10:2; 11:14).
- Lydia was saved and baptized with her household (Acts 16:15).
- The Philippian jailer believed and his entire household followed his example and were baptized (Acts 16:31-33).
- Crispus, chief ruler of the synagogue in the city of Corinth, *"...believed in the Lord, together with all his household"* (Acts 18:8).

Academic scholarship in the field of anthropology affirms the cultural importance of *oikos*:

In most cultures the social systems of greatest importance are based on kinship. Human beings everywhere are born into some sort of family. And almost always this family is important in giving them—literally and figuratively—a start in life: producing them, feeding, clothing, protecting, and educating them, and eventually establishing for them a 'place' in society. . . . In most cultures the kin group plays an even more important role [that in America], lasting throughout life as the principal source of the individual's emotional, economic, social-and frequently supernatural-support, and providing the basis for community organization.

David G. Mandelbaum of the University of California, observes:

Whatever diversity there may be among social groupings the world over, there are at least two types which are found in every human society. The family is one of them—in every land, among every people, the child is ordinarily raised and nurtured within a family. The other type of group universal to humanity...is the local community. Just as no person normally lives all his life alone, devoid of family, so does no family normally live entirely alone, apart from any local group.

Mandelbaum goes on to explain the third social category that he terms "clans." He explains that clans

"are extensions of the local group...voluntary associations based on common interests...ranging from trade unions and medical associations to bridge clubs and parent-teacher associations. Each of these groupings is held together by a common interest, an interest arising from mutual participation in the same trades, the mutual enjoyment of a game, or mutual problems in relation to a set of children."

In summary, these and others in the field of contemporary anthropology identify three societal universals:

1. Common kinship
2. Common community
3. Common interests

According to Tom Wolfe, “this phenomenon is not only transcultural, it is trans-historical, reaching across centuries.”

You may be asking yourself the question: “How or why is this important to our study and practice of New Testament evangelism?” The answer is that New Testament evangelism must take into account the three universal elements of *oikos*: common kinship, common community, and common interests, and the impact of these upon the way people respond to the Gospel. Ralph Neighbour writes of the critical nature of *oikos*:

In every culture of the world, the intimacy of *oikos* connections is considered to be sacred. The Chinese have a special word for close friendships, and such bonds are considered to be a sacred thing. In Argentina, I was shown a gourd and a metal tube with holes on one end of it for the drinking of *maté*tea. A most intimate *oikos* custom in their culture is sharing the *maté* by drinking from the same tube. Usually, the ceremony is limited to family members. The Argentine who explained this to me said, ‘Recently, I went to visit a friend who was sharing a gourd of *maté* with his wife and children. He paid me the highest honor by inviting me to participate.’

Family holds a prominent place among every culture, making it a critical concept for evangelism in any culture. The early Church used the integrated social system of *oikos* (common kinship, common community, and common interest) as the basis for communicating the Gospel. The focus and strategy of New Testament evangelism is communal rather than individualistic:

The (*oikos*) family understood in this broad way, as consisting of blood relations, slaves, clients and friends, was one of the bastions of Greco-Roman society. Christian missionaries made a deliberate point of gaining whatever households they could as lighthouses, so to speak, from which the Gospel could illuminate the surrounding darkness. [We are, then,] quite right in stressing the centrality of the *oikos* household to Christian advance.

The early church spread rapidly and organically by means of *oikos*—circles of influence and association—unshackled by the artificial experience of “forced evangelism; going reluctantly, flinchingly and embarrassingly door-to-door to encounter people they did not know, to explain a message which the first time often did not make sense, to an audience totally uninterested or unfriendly.” Thomas A. Wolf, former Chair of Missions at Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, observes: “*Oikos* evangelism is the God-given and God-ordained means for sharing our supernatural message.” George Peters concludes the same: “Household evangelism and household salvation are the most basic biblical and cultural approaches and expectations and need revival in our days.”

A Biblical Case Study of Oikos Evangelism

One specific case study of *oikos* evangelism in the New Testament comes from the conversion of Cornelius in Acts 10 and 11, who was briefly mentioned at the beginning of the previous section. Cornelius was a centurion, a Roman army officer charged with responsibility and leadership of a hundred soldiers. Luke refers to Cornelius as a God-fearer, meaning that he was a Gentile who worshipped the Hebrew God. Approximately ten percent of the population of the Roman Empire consisted of Gentiles who rejected pagan belief in the proliferation of Roman gods and goddesses and held to the monotheistic belief of the Jews. Although only a minority took the formal step of undergoing circumcision and adhering to the food laws and ritual laws of Moses, most of the God-fearers like Cornelius regularly attended the synagogue and embraced an ethical monotheism.

As Luke tells the story, Cornelius was praying one day, and an angel appeared to him and told him to send a messenger to Joppa and ask Peter to come and preach to him. At approximately the same time, Peter had a vision that compelled him to accompany the messenger. After Peter proclaimed the Gospel to Cornelius and his family and friends, the Holy Spirit fell on them, as had happened at Pentecost in Acts 2. This made Cornelius the first entirely Gentile convert to Christianity, and Luke clearly regards it as the beginning of the Church admitting Gentiles to full and equal fellowship with Jewish Christians. When we look closely at the dynamics of Cornelius' conversion, we see the central role of *oikos* in the paradigm shift. Cornelius called together his kinsmen and close friends to hear Peter preach (Acts 10:23-24). Earlier, when Cornelius sent two household servants and a trusted soldier to entreat Peter, the servants used the term *ton oikon* in the invitation to Cornelius' home. The conversion of Cornelius was accompanied by the conversion of the other members of his household consisting of relatives, close friends, household servants, and perhaps even soldiers under his charge. Although we do not know for certain, it is logical to presume that Cornelius and his *oikos* formed the nucleus of the Christian community that is mentioned in Acts 8:40 and 21:18.

Luke 10 Approach to Holistic Church Planting

Ø Read Luke 10.

Ø [Click here to watch video.](#)

Step 1: Pray and Join God in His Sovereign Work (Luke 10:1-4, 21-24).

Jesus told His disciples that they should pray that God raises workers for the field. The most strategic prayer will be to ask God to raise workers from *within* the harvest field to do the work. Raising and developing local leaders to do the work without much help from outsiders is key for long-term success.

- God is already at work.

The Holy Spirit is the primary agent of transformation in the communities where you will work. You can assume that God's presence has been active and present in people's lives before you enter a village or community. So, it is important that you take the time to pray and wait upon the

Lord to understand what God is doing in the community and then seek to align your approach with what God is doing.

- Prayer should undergird the whole process.

We should also pray to know the mind of God and where He is at work. When we discover that and join Him where He is at work, we will undoubtedly see success. Also, any spiritual victory is won in prayer. Reaching people and winning them for Christ is a spiritual battle. Prayer is at the beginning, middle, and end of any successful ministry.

Step 2: Pay Attention to the Person of Peace (Luke 10:5-7).

When Jesus sent out the seventy-two in Luke 10:1, He formed them into thirty-six church planting teams. He told these thirty-six teams that *“The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore, pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”* They were assured that there was a plentiful harvest even though the number of harvesters was small. They were told to pray for additional laborers. For some reason, God has chosen to use people to carry out His plans. What a grace gift that God uses us and challenges us to pray for other people to join us in the process!

In verses 5-7, Jesus introduced the idea of a Person of Peace. In holistic church planting, think of them in terms of someone who is:

- Receptive to Christ and the vision of getting His news out to villagers (not necessarily a believer but receptive to the message and its going out.)
- A person of reputation (good or bad); they are well known by the village.
- A referencer—they have influence in the village and can boldly refer others to Christ.

This concept is seen in practice throughout scripture even though it is not explained in detail:

- There was the Woman at the Well in John 4. She definitely had a reputation, and God used all of who she was to bring people to Jesus.
- Lydia was a merchant doing business when she encountered Paul. When *“the Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul,”* she influenced a whole family to come to Christ (Acts 16:14-15).
- For Jonah in the Old Testament, the king was the Person of Peace as he opened up the whole city to the kind of awakening we dream to see.
- Jesus found an unusual Person of Peace in the demoniac in Mark 5:4-20. After sending all of the spirits into nearby pigs, Jesus discouraged this brand-new believer from following Him to the next city. Instead, Jesus told him, *“Go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how He has had mercy on you.”* This man was truly a “Person of Peace.”

We could continue listing the people God chose to use as catalysts for spiritual and communal transformation, both in scripture and throughout history. Through the established relationships and reputations of Persons of Peace, God has built movements in cities, in tribes, villages, and on university campuses. People of all occupations and social standing can be Persons of Peace because God is the one who lays the foundation for them, not necessarily their power or position.

They are not inevitably “gatekeepers” or people in authority. Anyone can be the divinely-planted person through whom God wants to advance His Kingdom.

It is through people like this that God will plant prophetic communities of faith among unreached peoples and villages around the world. In every community we enter, God has been there before we arrive and has prepared those who will be players in seeing His kingdom spread. I wish the book of Acts included a separate section of how the Church spread in these villages that the thirty-six church planting teams visited. I imagine that the People of Peace led many of the churches planted in those towns from Luke 10, and that many of would have been the answers to the prayers of the seventy-two as they asked God to send out laborers to join them in the harvest.

What we must do initially is pray and decode; gather information and relationships that God can use to give direction to the ministry. It is God’s job to bring the right people across our path and to give us the eyes to recognize them. We could be entering a community of completely unreached people, penetrating an unevangelized people, or launching an effort to go to an entire village or city, but the principle always remains the same: God has people in place who will be receptive and willing to use their reputation to help move our efforts ahead. This has proven to be true all over the world.

Tom Virtue tells of one such example in Southern France. A small church planting team was praying for and decoding a brand-new college campus consisting primarily of unbelievers. As they entered the cafeteria to have lunch, they spotted a group of students they thought would be a good source of information about the campus. As they sat down next to the students, the entire group got up to leave. At the same time, an older woman came up and sat down where the students had left. They struck up a conversation and told the woman what they were doing. They found her very engaging and knowledgeable about the campus, and casually ate lunch with her. After lunch she invited them back to her office so they could finish their conversation and they learned that they had just spent the last hour with the university President. She asked specifically what she could do to ensure that they start a ministry on her campus. That’s what I call a Person of Peace!

We may move boldly forward with the conviction that God has people in place who will be receptive and willing to use their reputation to help move ahead our efforts on behalf of His kingdom. These People of Peace may or may not be the people with whom we partner to see a transformational community established and begin to see the environment of the village transformed by God’s power. They may only open the initial doors to find the others who lay the foundation, but we will not know that until we begin to work with them. We also cannot assume that these people will surface immediately, quickly, or even that it will happen before we become discouraged. God’s timing is still His, not ours; however, we can be confident that He has a heart for the location(s) we’re in and that He has people who are divinely planted and waiting to respond to our prayers. That conviction can fuel our continuing prayer for God to bring us across the path of divinely planted people who are not a surprise to God. We must always keep in mind Jesus’ words, *“The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”*

All too often we demonstrate a poor understanding of Christ’s Commission. We also have a poor understanding of the local church. If our definition is poor, then everything we say and do related to church planting will be poor. Our definition of a local church is often so encased with our

cultural desires that we do not know the difference between biblical prescriptions and cultural preferences. Frequently we operate from a poor definition of church planter. If we do not recognize the missionary nature of church planters, then we end up equating them with pastors. Missionaries and pastors have different callings, gift-mixes, passions, and functions to play in the Kingdom. When we send pastors to do apostolic-type work, or send missionaries and expect them to be pastors, we create the climate for problems, frustrations, burn-out, and disaster.

Are there times when a church should send out members to begin work in another area? Yes. Is it acceptable for a congregation to send out a pastor with several church members to plant a church in another community? Yes, under certain circumstances. However, such models tend to be difficult to reproduce (in view of four billion unbelievers), pose contextualization challenges that are costly, and often do not result in community transformation or a great amount of disciples made. The weight of the biblical definition for church planting is not found here. Such models should be the exception when it comes to church planting.

Keys To Finding A Person Of Peace

1. A Person of Peace welcomes both you and your message.

There is a common mistake we make in trying to find the Person of Peace. We think if someone receives us and welcomes us into their home, they are the Person of Peace. This is sometimes true, but it is not always the case. They are only a Person of Peace if they also welcome your message. A Person of Peace accepts Christ as Lord and invites others to hear about Him.

They may enjoy your company and extend hospitality. They may even be an influencer in the community. Be careful of investing lots of time in someone who doesn't show interest in and acceptance of the Gospel. Keep looking for those who, after hearing the message, receive it with joy. Watch for those who immediately begin to invite others to hear the story of Jesus. When you see this happening, you know that they are the person to whom Jesus was referring as someone who *promotes* peace. Focus your efforts on them and begin to work through them to reach the community.

2. Be open to the unexpected.

In the story of the Woman at the Well, found in John 4, the Person of Peace was not who we would have expected. Jesus shared the truth with an immoral woman. She received His message and called the whole town to come and listen. We often think the Person of Peace will be a community leader or person who is well-respected. Sometimes they are. Sometimes they are not.

Invest time in relationships with those who are key influencers in the community. You certainly want to share the Gospel with them, but do not think they are the only possible people God could use to unlock the doors of hearts and lives. It could be a woman, even one without a good reputation. Though most influencers are older, the Person of Peace could be a child or young person.

Your Person of Peace may be someone in government like Cornelius. They may be part of a system that persecutes you like the Philippian jailer was. Maybe they are a businesswoman like Lydia was or a housewife. They might even be a servant girl like the one who worked for Naaman (2 Kings 5). Just by looking at someone, you can rarely tell whether they will respond to the

Gospel. You only know what they will do with the Good News *after* you have shared it! Similarly, you do not know who will call their neighbors and invite others to hear. Evangelize the lost and watch the response. As you do that, you will discover the Person of Peace. God has chosen people He plans to work through in your target community. So, keep sharing the Gospel, praying, and watching for the Person of Peace until you find them!

Consider the following account from David Watson:

An old man sat on the edge of the road approaching the village. When he saw me, he slowly stood up and came to meet me.

“Finally!” he exclaimed, “You are finally here.” Before I could say anything he took my arm and pulled me into the village.

“Here is the man I told you about,” he told people as he pulled me along. “Here is the man I dreamed about every night for the last twenty years. My dreams told me that we must listen to everything this man tells us.”

I shared the Gospel, and a church now meets in the village. God is at work in people’s hearts even before we walk into their lives. According to this man, God told him twenty years earlier that I was coming to his village. Funny thing is, twenty years before that moment, I was studying to be an engineer. I had no desire and no call at that time to be a minister or a church planter.

Effective church planters are committed spiritual believers who live out their faith without apology. This is the secret to finding the Person of Peace. We must live out our faith as conspicuously as possible. This is not about being religious; it’s about being spiritual. God has a tremendous amount to say to us about being spiritual—rightly relating to God and His creation through a personal relationship with Him. This is about faith and living it out in all circumstances regardless of consequences. It is about loving God and loving people. It is about obedient thinking and living. This kind of life draws in people who are interested in spiritual matters and opens the door to communities for establishing obedient bodies of believers whose Head is the Lord Jesus Christ. We have to unconditionally live out a spiritual life to make evangelism and disciple-making happen.

So, in reality, finding the Person of Peace is more about us and the way we live than it is about finding the Person of Peace. If we are the people we should be, those who want to discover Christ come to us. This is about more than just living a good life. It is living an obedient life that demonstrates the love of God and shares God’s Word in such a way that the lost become saved, the saved become obedient, and the obedient make more disciples for the Lord Jesus Christ, resulting in self-replicating disciples and churches of Jesus Christ.

3. The Person of Peace isn’t always who you think they will be.

C. Anderson gives the following example:

“We were working in a slum community. We wanted to find people of influence there. The head of the municipality was the natural one to approach. We asked him who the various leaders were in his area. He specifically directed us to a

woman who was in charge of the women's committee. I immediately liked her. She was smart, about my age, and had obvious leadership giftings. She was very happy to meet us. Right away, she invited us into her home for tea. A few days later, she welcomed us for a delicious curry meal. She even called some of the other leaders to come and join us for food as well. 'She must be a woman of peace' I thought to myself.

Over the following months, our friendship developed. I continued to visit her often. We discussed the needs of the community and various possible projects. I shared the gospel and began to share Bible stories with her. She was open, always willing to listen. As the months went by, she heard many stories. She liked Jesus but was not willing to commit to following Him. I knew that though she was a good friend and a helpful person to know there, she was not the Woman of Peace I was looking for. I had to keep sharing with others until I found that person."

The Person of Peace strategy was developed from a composite view of Jesus' teaching when He sent out His disciples in Matthew 10, Luke 9, and Luke 10. Following are the commands Jesus gave to His disciples as He sent them out:

Matthew 10

- *And proclaim as you go, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.'* (Matthew 10:7)
- *Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons.* (Matthew 10:8)
- *You received without paying; give without pay.* (Matthew 10:8)
- *Acquire not gold or silver or copper for your belts, no bag for your journey, or two tunics or sandals or a staff, for the laborer deserves his food.* (Matthew 10:9-10)
- *Whatever town or village you enter, search there for some worthy person and stay at their house until you leave.* (Matthew 10:11 NIV)
- *And if anyone will not receive you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet when you leave that house or town.* (Matthew 10:14)
- *Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves.* (Matthew 10:16)

Luke 9 (Additional commands not contained in Matthew 10)

- *And whatever house you enter, stay there, and from there depart.* (Luke 9:4)
 - This is different from staying only in the house of a worthy person.

Luke 10 (Additional commands not contained in Matthew 10 or Luke 9)

- *Go out by two ahead of Me to every town and place I am about to go.* (adapted from Luke 10:1)
- *Therefore, pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.* (Luke 10:2)
- *Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves.* (Luke 10:3 NIV)
- *...Do not greet anyone on the road.* (Luke 10:4 NIV)
- *When you enter a house, first say, 'Peace to this house.' If someone who promotes peace is there, your peace will rest on them; if not, it will return to you. Stay there, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house.* (Luke 10:5-7 NIV)

- *Heal the sick who are there and tell them, “The kingdom of God has come near to you.”*
(Luke 10:9 NIV)

This is radically different from traditional evangelism and church planting methods. In the Person of Peace strategy, the church planter has one job—find the Person of Peace. This person may be from any walk of life, but he or she will welcome you, listen to your message, help you with your livelihood, and allow you to stay in his or her home and influence his or her family and the community for the sake of the Gospel.

The holistic church planter does not do any of the traditional things required by traditional church planting methodology. He does not preach open-air meetings. He does not hand out tracts or sell books or give away Bibles. He does not offer mass rallies or healing services.

Finding the Person of Peace starts with obedience to Christ and looks for where Christ is about to visit. This is evidenced by the presence of the Person of Peace. If there is no Person of Peace, then you move on. The Person of Peace is found through prayer and service. In our experience, this service is sometimes miraculous, as Luke 10 describes. Often, though, service is as simple as feeding the hungry or helping someone carry water to their village. In both cases, the church planter freely gives of himself or herself.

We are told to pray for harvesters. The Person of Peace will be this harvester. We equip this person to be the disciple-maker for his or her community. We are to be as “wise as serpents”, but as “innocent as doves”—gentle and a threat to no one. We are to work or do business for our food, for a worker is worthy of earned wages. This avoids awkward questions regarding how we support ourselves. It also puts us at work when the rest of the community is at work, allowing us to meet people and have a reason to be in the community. All the ministries that Jesus commands us to do are about meeting the real and felt needs of the community. As we do this we are building relationships that allow us to talk about the Kingdom of God. The person who is responsive to this message becomes the focus of our attention. This focus is on the household (*oikos*), and we do not move around once the Person of Peace is found. We then make disciples of this family, who then takes on the responsibility of reaching their community for Christ.

We train disciple-makers to enter new communities after extensive prayer. When disciple-makers enter the community, they look for ways to meet the felt needs of the community through service, education, or business. As they meet these needs, they are meeting people and sharing openly about the Kingdom of God. When the Person of Peace reveals himself or herself, the disciple-maker shifts the focus to the Family of Peace. The disciple-maker starts a Discovery Group to help the family discover on their own who God is and how they must relate to Him. The disciple-maker teaches them how to study the Word of God, but does not lead the Bible studies or do any of the preaching and teaching. The focus is on the family learning directly from God through His Word. The disciple-maker guides the direction of the study, but does not conduct the study, except to model the process a few times in the beginning.

When the family comes to Christ, the disciple-maker helps them to move from being a Bible study group to fulfilling all the requirements of church. A leader is identified and trained to lead the group and to establish more groups through the family’s network of friends and family.

Disciples make more disciples. Leaders equip more leaders. Groups establish more groups. Churches plant more churches.

(Excerpted from *Contagious Disciple Making* by David Watson and Paul Watson, copyright Thomas Nelson, 2014.)

In summary, the Person of Peace:

- Is a non-Christian—Jesus sent His disciples into the harvest among non-saved people.
- Has spiritual questions and is a seeker.
- Manifests that God is working through him or her.
- Demonstrates that God has him or her prepared to receive the Gospel.
- Is affirmation in the community that Jesus is visiting said community; God is at work there.

Example of Church Planting Through the Person of Peace

At this point, it may be helpful to share an example from my own experience. I was asked by denominational leaders to salvage a church planting effort that had been rendered unsuccessful among a particular unreached people group. The journey was long, difficult, and dangerous to reach the remote village where the effort had taken place. When I arrived for my first visit to the village, I learned quickly that the previous church planter had not only failed to start a church, he had angered everyone in the village to the point that their anger was turned toward me. He had shown himself to be a liar as well as immoral, making the obstacles I faced seemingly insurmountable. However, while the vocal village leaders denounced the previous church planter and then me by association, I observed that the tall elderly village chief simply stood quietly to one side. After the village leaders had said all they wanted to say, the old chief whose name was Tullu spoke. Essentially, he said that the village would allow me to visit from time to time, and that they would watch closely to see if I was like the other man, or if I was a man of honesty and integrity.

On my way down the long dusty unpaved road to my home many hours south, I began to pray and asked the Lord to provide an effective church planting strategy. The only answer I received was, "Make friends with Tullu." I protested, insisting that there must be a more elaborate strategy to use in reaching the unreached people of the remote village. But with each protest came the same response, "Make friends with Tullu." So, on my next visit to the village, and every visit thereafter, my first place to go was Tullu's home. I would walk up the steep hill to his *boma* (home), and request an audience with him. He would send word to allow me to approach, and I would enter, sit on the animal skins in front of where he was seated, and we would speak. Tullu told me about the village and about his people, and I learned a great deal from him. He also instructed me as to how to approach the villagers, and he would ask for my help when someone was ill. Although I am not a medical doctor, I always arrived prepared to tend to what medical needs I was able to treat. I shared what I could of the Gospel with Tullu and the other villagers, but neither he nor the villagers were responsive.

The day came for a gathering of the villagers, to which I had invited many. Only a handful appeared, with others straggling in as our gathering progressed. Eventually Tullu arrived, and he sat in silence in the back of the primitive space where we were meeting. I was encouraged to see him there, and I shared the Gospel passionately with the people. No one responded. I was greatly discouraged and felt ready to give up when Tullu stood and made his way to the front of the room. All eyes turned to Tullu, and everyone listened as he slowly spoke in a quiet old voice: "I have been watching this man closely a long time now, and I have determined that he is a man of his word. I have listened to the stories he tells of his God from his special book, and I have determined that both his book and his God are true. I have decided to follow his God's ways, and every one of you should too!"

Within a relatively brief period of time, three small churches were started, where there had been none, from the influence of the elderly village chief. Without a doubt, Tullu was a Person of Peace in keeping with what Jesus describes in Luke 10.

Either Do Your Ministry through the Person of Peace or Leave

When a Person of Peace is not found in a community or an area, Jesus said to not do anything—to just leave. It means that it is not a place where Jesus is about to visit; God is not at work there; it is not God's time for that place. Leave, pray more, and plan to come back later.

Sometimes a missionary will spend years in one place without seeing anyone interested in what he or she has to say or do. We spiritualize that by saying he or she is sowing and someone else will come and harvest. After some time, maybe up to six months, if we don't discover a Person of Peace, we should leave, visit other places, and look for the Person of Peace in those places.

When the Person of Peace is found, the church planter becomes his or her shadow. He or she will do ministry through that person and his or her network of relationships in the community: family members, friends, etc. We should avoid as much as possible winning one person at a time, and instead focus on families and affinity groups in the community. The church planter should focus on the other members of the family of the Person of Peace and also his or her other network of relationships in the community.

Step 3: Put into Action Asset-Based Development (Luke 10:8-9).

After finding the Person of Peace, what is next? Know that God is at work in the community and join Him. There is a harvest to be reaped. The Person of Peace is a seed—the harvest is beyond them. The Person of Peace has a social network of family, friends, and colleagues, and each of those have their own social network, and these social networks overlap. The Person of Peace is the doorway to all these social networks. The Person of Peace will not necessarily be an evangelist, but he or she will help identify the most critical needs in the village or community, as well as the key individuals to be a part of addressing those needs.

Jesus said, *“Heal the sick who are there, and tell them, ‘The Kingdom of God has come near you’”* (Luke 10:9).

Before even giving the Word, we should respond to the needs of the community. The Person of Peace will be identified as we enter a village and connect with community leaders to identify needs and facilitate an asset-based response. Persons of Peace open doors for transformational development, which in turn opens the door for the church to be born and to flourish. The best way to show the love of God is to help people in practical ways meet their needs. This way of showing God's love opens up communities and gives the church planter the opportunity to look for the Person of Peace. We have seen communities opening up because a Christian comes in and helps with health issues, schools, seed banks, etc. Hundreds of churches have been started because the love of God for people has been practically shown.

It is important to consider the spiritual context of the needs that will be identified when utilizing asset-based development. For any problem/need in the village that surfaces, consider what are the underlying spiritual causes. Don't make this determination on your own. Work to determine

the root spiritual causes from the *community's perspective*. As you do so, pay attention to what surfaces as the major barriers in a community in terms of people knowing Christ.

By way of example, a critical need that may be identified by community leaders is child nutrition. In a maternal-child health project it will be important to consider both the physical and spiritual causes of poor health. Perhaps the critical need has arisen in the village because mothers do not value their children until they are two years old and are seen as replaceable—that is a spiritual issue that must be addressed. What an opportunity for the church planter as he or she seeks to establish a prophetic community of faith that is relevant to the needs of the village/community!

You, therefore, have a dual role during the entry/assessment phase to understand the root causes of the problems that are identified and how they relate to the spiritual needs of the people. If you take the time to understand both need and cause during the assessment phase, you will then be able to intentionally integrate ministry into your overall humanitarian development efforts. In other words, our goal must be to avoid and eliminate a dangerous dichotomy between our understanding and practice of Christian Witness and development work. Our church planting efforts need to communicate the Lordship of Christ over all aspects of people's lives.

We have traditionally implemented and perpetuated an approach that doesn't work. Pastors are starving. Villages are suffering. Churches sing and dance but do nothing to help either problem. This is the result of wrongly separating and distancing compassion ministries under the negative designation "the social gospel." Take note that Jesus did not preach repentance where He was not also healing the sick and feeding the hungry. Our task is not either/or, but both/and.

The Project: *Transformation* Process

Be guided by God. Pray and seek His vision. God wants the community to be involved because this is how they can become impacted and come to know Him. Rely on your fellow church planting team members. Come together, pray, and seek His wisdom.

Working with the Person of Peace, allow him or her to help gather key village leaders and lead them in the following discussion:

1. Imagine that Jesus was the leader of your community. What do you think are some of the first things He would change?

Instructions: If the group is struggling to think of ideas, then you can use some of these questions to prompt discussion.

- What would Jesus do about food insecurity?
- What would Jesus do to assist widows and orphans?
- How would He strengthen families?
- How would He promote safe drinking water, adequate housing and food, health services, garbage and sewer systems, and decent roads?
- What would be done about the education of children and adults?
- What would He do about alcoholism, drug abuse, gambling, and other addictions?
- What would He do about spousal and child abuse?
- How would He improve relationships between people?

From your list, what is the issue that God is leading you to address first?

2. Consider possible spiritual root causes of the needs/problems identified.

“One hack at roots equals one thousand hacks at the branches.” — French proverb

If we understand the spiritual context (worldview/barriers/entrance points for the Gospel) during the identification/assessment phase, we are better able to design programming where ministry is integral throughout the project.

The following case studies illustrate the importance of working to identify the root spiritual causes of the humanitarian needs/problems.

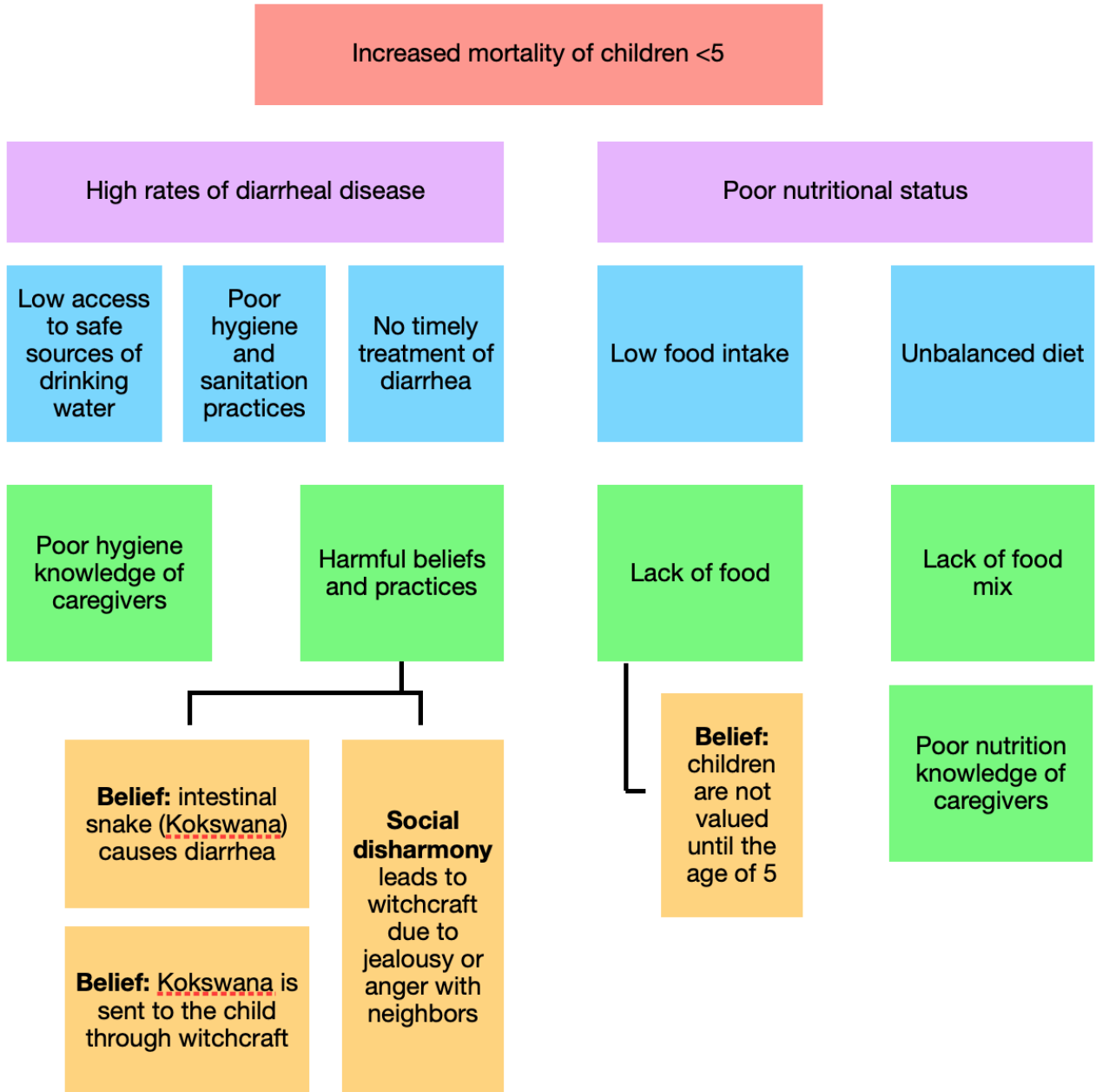
Case Study 1

Tamak is a district in the North East Region of the Republic of ACountry. The total population is 25,000 and the district is divided into 21 villages containing 4,170 households. Safe water coverage stands at 45% (1,877 households) and latrine coverage is extremely low at only 0.2%, meaning that currently only 83 households are using pit latrines. Among the population there are 4,900 children under the age of five years. The global acute malnutrition rate is 16%, which is above the emergency threshold (10%). Diarrheal disease rates are also high, with 60% of children under five having suffered from an episode of diarrhea in the preceding two weeks. Currently there are no community health workers in the 21 villages. The dominant cultural belief regarding the land is that it is sacred and belongs to mother earth (indigenous belief) and this has led to the population not adopting the use of latrines.

A holistic community appraisal by staff found that the people associate serious diarrheal illness with the concept of an "intestinal snake" called *kokwana*. It is said that the snake is "sent" to the child through witchcraft, and it "eats" the child's food and the child itself. The people also believe that the snake is often sent to the child, through witchcraft, by a jealous neighbor. It was also found that, in general, mothers don't value their children until they are two years old and that they see their children as replaceable.

One helpful assessment activity is to develop a "Problem Tree" followed by a "Solution Tree."

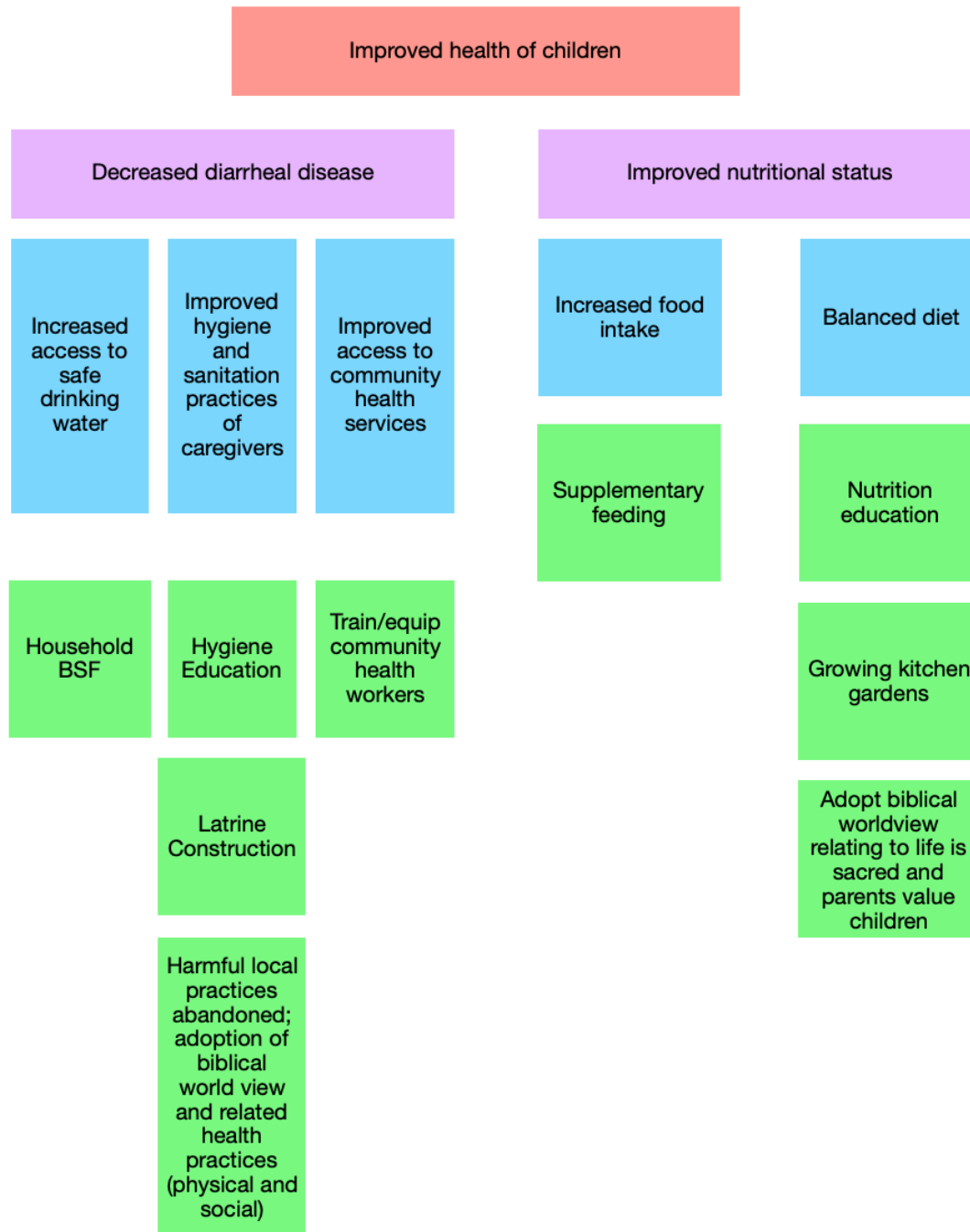
Problem Tree, Case Study 1



It is obvious in this case study that the core causes of the problem are spiritual. If we don't consider these issues during the design phase, we will tend to focus our solutions on the tangible/physical (modern worldview) without considering the spiritual context. Again, this is an opportunity for the church that will be birthed from this process to be an integral factor in village transformation.

Solution Tree, Case Study 1

One of the core beliefs of the causes of diarrhea is the strong held cultural beliefs. If we do not address this in our program design, we may have little impact in changing behavior, and the new church will miss a significant opportunity for serving as an agent of transformation in the village/community.



The solution tree included the goal of addressing existing cultural beliefs through communicating biblical worldview and influencing the existing beliefs.

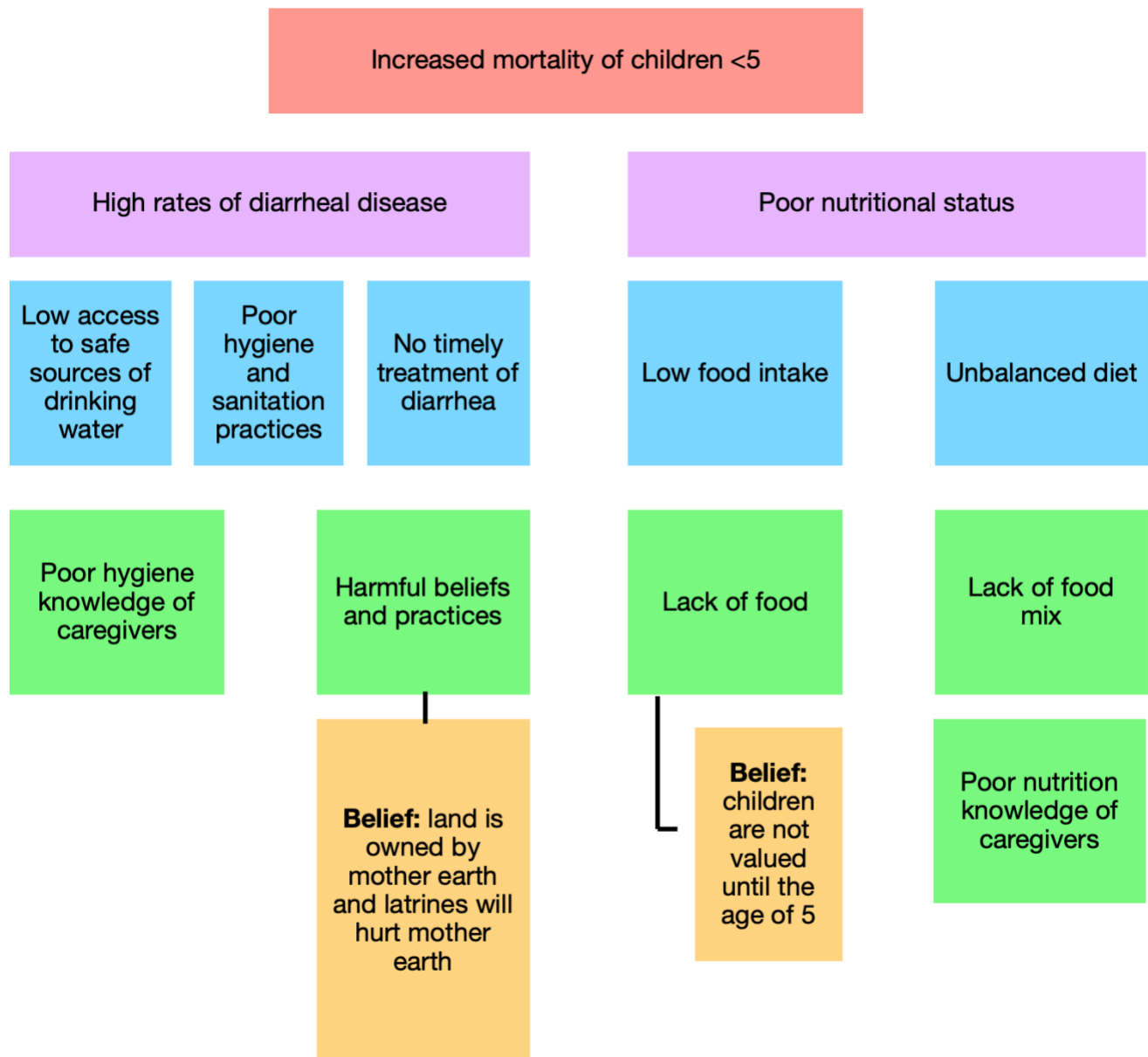
Case Study 2

Tamak is a district in the Northeast Region of the Republic of ACountry. The total population is 25,000 and the district is divided into 21 villages containing 4,170 households. Safe water coverage stands at 45% (1,877 households) and latrine coverage is extremely low at only 0.2%, meaning that currently only 83 households are using pit latrines. Among the population there are 4,900 children under the age of five years. The global acute malnutrition rate is 16%, which is above the emergency threshold (10%). Diarrheal disease rates are also high, with 60% of children under five having suffered from an episode of diarrhea in the preceding two weeks. Currently there are no community health workers in the 21 villages. During the assessment the Samaritan's Purse staff also found that in general mothers don't value their children until they are two years old and that they see their children as replaceable.

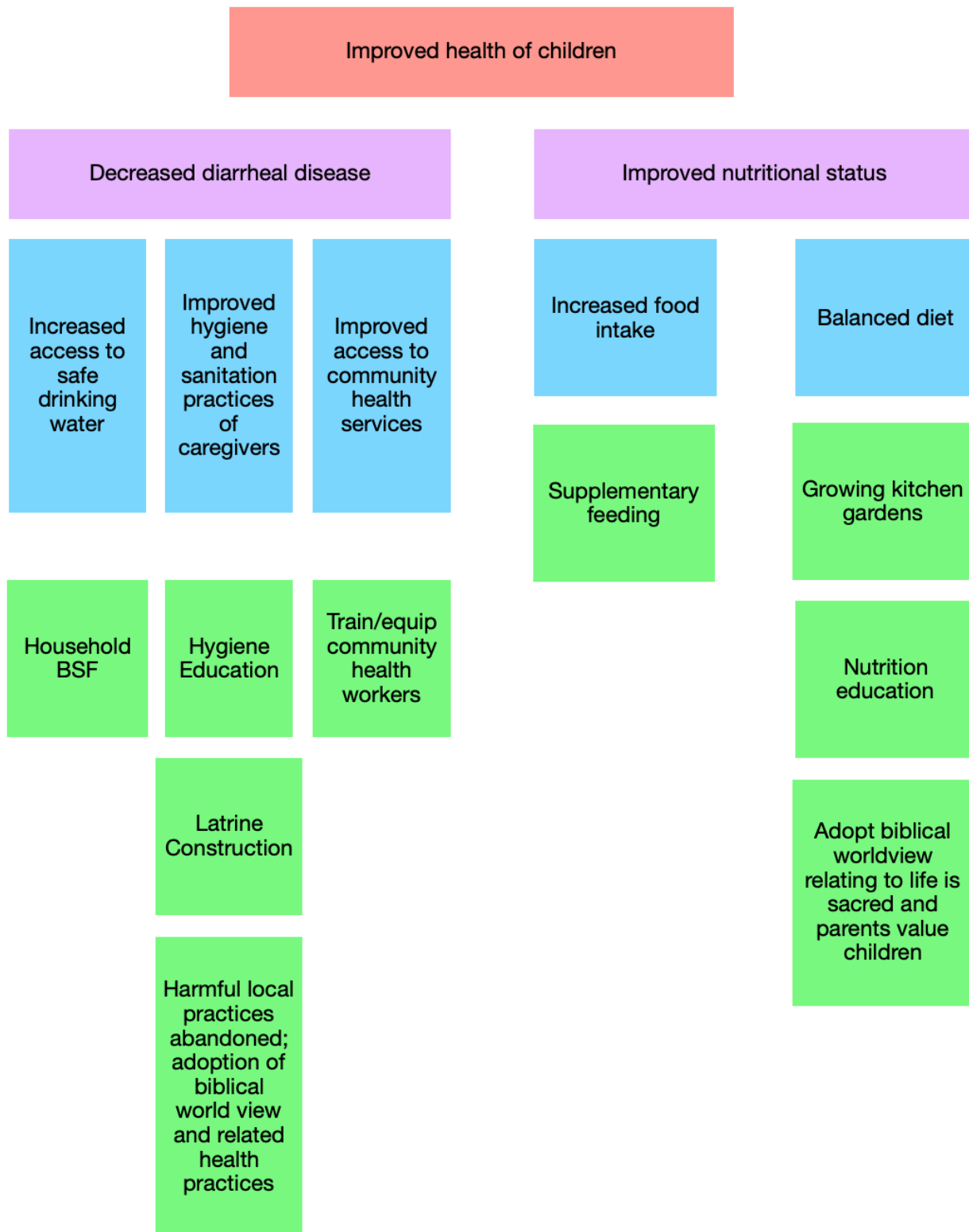
In the Tamak district, there are no formal registered Churches in the 21 villages. There are a number of small house Churches and a handful of believers spread across the 21 villages. Evangelical Christians represent 1% of the population (250 people).

The dominant cultural belief regarding the land is that it is sacred and belongs to mother earth (indigenous belief) and this has led to the population not adopting the use of latrines. The local priestess states that latrines pollute the land so the best practice is to urinate and defecate in the local river, which keeps the land clean.

Problem Tree, Case Study 2



Solution Tree, Case Study 2



The problem tree helps to determine the *core causes* of the issue/problem from the community's perspective, and then the solution tree identifies what will be involved with addressing both the physical related spiritual needs of the village/community.

3. *Identify what resources are available in the community to resolve this issue.*

Make a list of available resources. Include the identity of the person or entity that is the steward of the resource.

4. *Distinguish truth from lies in ownership of resources. An example would be the lie that you are lacking or don't have the ability—we all have unique talents, skills, and ability. Using all God has given you, you can transform your community. What other lies are prominent in the community?*

We need to start to see all that God has given us.

So often we listen to Satan's lies and believe we don't have anything. We compare ourselves with others and are only able to see what we don't have. To help us think more clearly and remember all God has given us, we will consider three categories: Natural—Inside; Natural—Outside; Spiritual.

- Natural—Inside refers to all the gifts and abilities that God has given us. For example: the ability to speak, the ability to make decisions, the ability to cook food, the ability to make a fire, etc.
- Natural—Outside refers to all the resources that God has given you in your community. For example: water, land, sun, schools, etc.
- Spiritual refers to all of the things that we have because of our relationship with God. For example: prayer, God's power, miracles, etc.

5. *Educate the community on the vision and transformational aspect of the work. Create ownership in the community.*

- Form a leadership group from the village and church planting team. Develop a structure to guide this. Avoid people with personal interests; find people with the right heart and passion.
- Involve the community in sustaining the work. Involve them from the beginning. Build relationships with community people. This can be done by visiting homes, having an open discussion, or sharing a meal together.
- Listen and appreciate the views of the community.
- Involve the government. When any difficulties arise, the government knows the work, and there is already a relationship.
- Do not compromise your witness. It is perfectly acceptable to have criteria for committee members. For example, do not get drunk, do not be violent, etc.

6. *Implement the project in the community.*

- Do not be afraid to begin with small projects. Since God brings growth when we sow seeds, even small seeds, explain that the group will use a new name for small-scale projects: "seed projects".
- Definition of seed projects: These are very small-scale ministry projects carried out by the local church that demonstrate God's love to the people in the community

and possibly to other churches that have not yet caught the vision. They are for the community and can be completed in a relatively short period of time. It is important to emphasize they must be short-term projects that benefit others and not the church.

- Some seed project examples: a church-based community garden, community clean-up, cleaning a local water source, building a local house for a vulnerable family, organizing a feeding program for the most vulnerable in the community, conducting a one-day feeding event, planning an awareness campaign (for example—good hygiene, proper sanitation, etc.).

Step 4: Proclaim the Gospel and Organize Converts into Communities of Faith (Luke 10:9-20).

1. We prayerfully enter a village where deep spiritual need and deeply troubling need persists.
2. We speak with villagers while searching for the Person of Peace.
3. Working through the influence of the Person of Peace, we lead villagers to identify their greatest need(s) as well as the resources available in the community to resolve the need(s).
4. We help distinguish God's Truths from lies in ownership of resources.
5. We practically train how to use chosen resources.
6. We introduce the life changing Gospel of Jesus Christ and organize converts into communities of faith.

The following link will give you access to the supplemental reading:

<https://www.unfinishedtask.org/ABD.html>

Read the PDF on Asset-Based Development. *Impacting Communities and Business Relationships through High Quality Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships*, David L. Neely, President and CEO, Affecting Change International

Using Logic Models to Bring Together Planning, Evaluation, and Action

Logic Model Development Guide

ICT4DF White Paper. David L. Neely

Next Steps

DEVOTIONAL

Ø Scripture for meditation: Isaiah 58:9-10

This passage includes both a warning and a promise. The nature of biblical prophecy was almost always to pronounce warning followed closely by a promise for those who heed the warning. Francis of Assisi (A.D. 1181-1226) did indeed heed the warning declared in this passage and received the corresponding promise.

As the curtain was about to fall on his most unusual life, Francis was in a small hut he had built near the wayside chapel of Saint Mary of the Angels at Portiuncula below Assisi. He was only forty-five years old, but his eyesight was gone and his frame was bent. As he lay dying, no doubt he reflected on coming upon a poor leper when he was a young man. He expected to be repulsed, but a strange thing happened. He overcame his aversion to the appearance of the man, dismounted and embraced the man. Francis gave him all the money that he had with him. He was instantly filled with joy and turned to wave good-bye only to find that the man had vanished like he never existed. Francis was convinced that this was the first time he met Jesus. He immediately made a pilgrimage to Rome, and at the tomb of Saint Peter, he exchanged his clothes of finery with a tattered beggar and stood for the remainder of the day fasting. Returning to Assisi, he stopped at the forsaken wayside chapel of St. Damian's. As he began to pray, a voice said, "Go Francesco, and repair my house, which you see is falling into ruin." Francis returned to his father's home, gathered cloth, sold it and his horse, and took the money to the poor priest at St. Damian's. When his father discovered what he had done, he was furious. He had Francis beaten and locked in his room until his mother could release him. His father took Francis before the bishop, and there Francis stripped off his clothes, gave them to his father and said, "Hitherto I have called you my father on earth; henceforth I desire to say only, 'Our Father who art in heaven.'" This gave Francis even greater joy. Soon, Francis was traveling the countryside, singing hymns of praise and preaching. He preached outdoors. He preached in marketplaces. He preached from church steps and the walls of castle courtyards. His message was simple: repent and believe the whole Gospel. The salvation of souls was the burden of his preaching and prayers. People flocked to hear the message, but mainly to see the example he set before them.

What is the prevailing passion of your life? How does your lifestyle reflect that passion? If you are compelled to confess any discrepancy between what you profess as your passion and what your lifestyle reveals to be your true passion, this is a wonderful opportunity to deal honestly with the truth.

Prayer: *"Father, grant discernment of the true state of my heart. Reveal what I love most, and empower me to respond justly if I discover that the object of my highest affection is anything or*

anyone but You. Ruthlessly reorder my mind and heart around You as the Center. Make my heart to burn for others to experience and express the same. For Jesus' sake, Amen."

Ø [Click here to watch video.](#)

Questions for Assessment

Congratulations on completing your study of the **Project: Transformation** curriculum. Now is the time to put into practice the things you've learned. We encourage you to pause and reflect on the questions below and answer them as fully as you wish. When you're finished, we would love the opportunity to learn how the Lord spoke to you through this study. Attach your answers to an email and send to dfowlkes.unfinishedtask@gmail.com. We will read each response you send and will pray for you specifically as we rejoice in knowing the Lord will use you to advance His purposes.

1. What is the responsibility of the church in addressing the needs of a community in which it finds itself?
2. How can the church become the center of community development?
3. What is your understanding of the term "holistic church planting"?
4. How does asset-based development differ from traditional development practices?
5. What role does the church play in involving the community to affect positive spiritual, emotional, and physical change within the local community?
6. What is the mandate to be achieved in and through holistic church planting?
7. What is the role of the person of peace in a community and why should the holistic church planter seek him or her out?
8. What is a Problem Tree and a Solution Tree? How can it help in the process of asset-based development and holistic church planting?
9. Give an example of how you will use the **Project: Transformation** model for transforming a community through asset-based development and holistic church planting in your specific context.

Moving Forward

Your study has been facilitated by one of our Regional Network Coordinators. That person is there to encourage you as you continue in your church planting efforts. He or she will also be communicating your successes and struggles with our leadership team, who will be praying for you regularly. **You are not alone.** Together we are the church, and it is our joy to encourage you in obediently following the Lord's call on your life.

If you would like to learn more about The Unfinished Task Network, you may [visit our website](#) for further information.