

Kingdom Principles for Where There Are No Jobs

To be read along with Where There Are No jobs: Enterprise Solutions for Employment and ' Public Goods' for the Poor, or used as a stand-alone document for Christian witness.

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Economic Development as Holistic Christian Ministry

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The Good News is Good News!

The central purpose of international ministry is to communicate the gospel in terms that people can understand, and respond to. This communication requires an integration of words and deeds, verbal concepts articulated in acts of service. This is a very exciting, serious, and worthy goal. The change in people's lives through a relationship with God because of what Jesus did on the cross is actually spectacular!

Most people in the world today do not yet understand that faith in Jesus, and what He did on the cross, rescues them from the consequences of sin and results in the security of life after death with God. They also do not understand that faith in Christ makes sense out of the present, and provides meaning to life.

They have not been introduced to the family of God in the local church. They really need to hear the good news, and want to.

Economic development projects provide a context in which the Kingdom message can be presented in a holistic manner, embracing the needs of the full person, just as it was in the outreach of the first century church. It is interesting to note that in the short letter of Paul to Titus, he mentions eight times the idea of "doing good." The Christians of that day were known for how they reached out to help others in need, "a people eager to do what is good," (Titus 2:14). They were instructed to "learn to devote themselves to doing what is good, in order that they may provide for daily necessities and not live unproductive lives..." (Titus 3:14). In a world where poverty and unemployment is increasing for the majority in the world, and where opportunities to "do good" abound, the presentation of the Good News of the Kingdom that embraces the whole person-not just the spiritual/future but also the physical/present-is very easy to talk about, and something people are anxious to hear about and see in action. Church outreach integrated with projects to promote education, job creation, health, and other service projects that help people are much more exciting and credible than the entertainment events that churches often use to attract people, such as elaborate music / multimedia presentations, or special holiday trips for the youth group.

Even so, the presentation of the Good News seems to disappear quickly from holistic ministry projects that attempt to integrate good works and social transformation with evangelism and discipleship. One reason for this is that many Christians may not fully understand that they have specific and clear instructions to share the Good News. As Christians we exercise the gifts that we have for the glory of God, and we also share our faith story. We promote that our friends and neighbors have opportunity to participate in the family of God in the local church, and are involved in its outreach to the community. The life of the Christian should generate the question of "why do you live like that?" which naturally provides an opportunity to share "why" they do good and "why" they do not do evil.

If we simply put these two concepts together-(1) people need to hear the Good News+ (2) we, as Christians, need to share the Good News-it would seem to be easy to keep a vision for the expression of faith both in word and deed. So many people have never really heard the Good News, and holistic ministry is such a great means of loving others by serving, and thereby giving glory to God.

But many Christians seem to have forgotten that the message of the cross is Good News. In North America we celebrate openness to diversity, and this is quite right in relation to race, cultural expression, language, etc. When we accept, consciously or unconsciously, the equal validity of all religions, or the commonly stated idea that "all faith lead to the same truth," we forget that the Gospel is uniquely good news. It may seem divisive to state that Jesus "is the way, the truth, and the life," but this is the Good News. God wants every person to be saved, and come to enjoy the new life in Christ. Salvation is through Christ alone. To receive God's grace and participate in His reign in this world is life changing, both in this life and in the next!

If we believe this, and are also aware that more than 70% of the world's population today define themselves as non-Christian, and even part of the remaining 30% supposedly "Christian" truly have not heard the Good News in a way that is understandable to them, there is a BIG opportunity out there for sharing the gospel! This might motivate us to make the presentation of how to have a relationship with God a central part of our program if we believe that the gospel is Good News for ourselves and for others. What is the gospel? The Good News is that Jesus loves me! Created in the image of God, I also can have a relationship with God, the creator, who affirms life, wants me to celebrate life, and have a quality life. Life encompasses all of life, the spiritual and the physical.

The Legacy of Holistic Outreach: Health and Education

Salvation is the regeneration of the soul AND transformation of the whole person to glorify God with the totality of one's being. Missions have been at the forefront in demonstrating this phenomenon: "Separating gospel-as-word, gospel-as-deed and gospel-as-sign has serious consequences. In cultures in which words have lost their meaning, as is often the case in the West, deeds are necessary to verify what the words mean." 1 The call to holism in Christian outreach has long been part of international missions, and has also been demonstrated in significant investment in health and educational programs. As early as 1773 there were missionary physicians deployed with William Carey in India (2) Another major part of that mission outreach was educational, resulting in the founding by William Carey of the Serampore College in 1818. (3) Mission hospitals and mission schools were characteristic of the holistic outreach of international missions in Africa, Asia, and Latin America in the 19th and 20th centuries.

The *Centro Evangelico*, a church in the low income neighborhood of Blas de Lezo, is a modern day example of holistic ministry. Located in Cartagena, Colombia, this church is growing by leaps and bounds. Many people have come to the church through its elementary school programs in slum villages, where the church has taken the initiative for creating schools for the poor that are especially targeted at families that have been displaced from their communities by the civil war in Colombia. Others come to the church after being served by the health clinics and nutritional programs the church operates in the same areas. But it is the Saturday training sessions in basic business skills that draw the largest crowds. These programs are designed to create income opportunities for the poor, of whom many have recently arrived in Cartagena with only the clothes on their backs. Enterprise education of various types is promoted, most of it targeted at women. The two morning services on Sunday are filled to overflowing! The multiple venues for evangelism and discipleship of the Blas de Lezo church are attributed, to a large extent, to the programs of outreach in economic development.

U.S. Christians often hear reports of missionary doctors and teachers, but business and economics can also be tools for Christian ministry. Jesus taught us to pray: "give us this day our daily bread." There were no social welfare programs available when He taught this, and in the 21st century the world's poor majority want a job, not a handout. In environments like Northern Colombia, where thou sands are displaced by civil war and unemployment is over 50%, the instructions of the Apostle Paul "to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your own hands, just as we told you, so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and that you will not be dependent on anybody" (I Thessalonians 4:11-12) are seldom cited. Should any preacher dare to use this passage as a sermon text, he would be asked how to apply this. The book presented just that: a response that shows how to apply Paul's instructions-an outline of how to promote productive economic activity so that people can earn their daily bread.

The •New• Ministry Tool Economic Development

Productive economic activity is a means to enhance and support Christian ministry. This phenomenon of "Kingdom business," (4) though relatively unknown, has seen successful implementation in the church since the Apostle Paul first discussed his own work habits in his letters to young churches. He was quite clear that people should work to make a living, and returns to this theme in the second letter to the same church of Thessalonica, where he says, "if a man will not work, he shall not eat." (II Thessalonians 3:10). But this is not always so easy to put into practice (either working or eating!) in a world where poverty and unemployment are commonplace.

Models are needed that combine economic development with a clear focus on holistic Christian outreach. They need to be integrated with church ministry and a clear emphasis on Christian witness. It is the love of money, not money itself that "is a root of all kinds of evil." (I Timothy 6:10). God created economic activity, and gives us the ability to use this tool for good. God, the provider, reminds us: "to remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth ..." (Deuteronomy 8:19) It is not the Internet, not neoliberal economic models, not globalization or free markets, but our God who provides for us through productive work.

The potential of international economic outreach as a ministry tool goes beyond the financial blessings it brings as it incarnates the gospel: it can provide a socially understandable foundation for social interaction with those who do not know Jesus. It can empower and mobilize an entire new population, the marketplace people, to get involved in missions. Economic projects can address the critical resource constraints facing international ministry projects, creating innovative new structures for financial support.

These concepts are not new. The history of the church is full of examples of the importance of productive economic activity:

- The Apostle Paul worked as a leather artisan to provide for his support. In his first letter (I Thessalonians 2:9) we find the comment: "we worked night and day not to be a burden on you." In many other references (II Thessalonians 3:7-9; I Corinthians 9:6,18; Acts 20:34-35) we learn that Paul wanted to fund his ministry through economic enterprise as an example for others. The reference in Acts 18 to "making tents" with Aquila and Priscilla is a reference to leather working, since mobile housing units were made from leather in those days, as they still are in some places in the Middle East today. Perhaps references to the armor of God in Ephesians 6 also come from Paul's leatherwork, since much of the protective wear was crafted from leather. For example, the shield to quench the fiery darts (vs. 16) could do so because it was coated with leather that was soaked in water.
- Religious orders such as the Franciscans, Jesuits, and Benedictines (5) utilized productive economic activity to finance their programs, and gave a very important place to the concept of work. "I worked with my hands, and moreover wanted to work, and I desired that all the other Brothers be occupied with honorable work. And those who could not do work must learn it, not for the desire of remuneration, but to give a good example and not be lazy," said St. Francis of Assisi. (6)
- Some early protestant denominations utilized productive economic activity to support ministry and as their foundation for international mission outreach. The spiritual unity of the Moravian

Brethren in Europe was evidenced by communal economic enterprises in Europe: salt processing, clothing production, and even a brewery. (7) When the Moravians sent people to minister to the Indians in North America in 1741, their assumption was that the entire program would be supported by economic activities: textiles, pottery, a tannery, and again, a brewery. (8) Though John Wesley disagreed with the Moravians on matters of doctrine, he praised their economic programs: "you are not slothful in Business, but labor to eat your own Bread; and wisely manage the Mammon of Unrighteousness, that ye may have to give to others also, to feed the Hungry, and cover the Naked with a Garment." (9)

- William Carey, the famous missionary pioneer mentioned previously as a promoter of health and educational mission programs, was also a shoemaker. He taught that to be a missionary, it was necessary that people have a work skill that would enable them to sustain their needs in their chosen missionary environment. Even as he promoted health and educational projects, he also developed the concept of saving banks for India, helped to establish the printing industry, and even introduced the steam engine. (10)

Work Is an Integral Part of God's Creation

God created economic activity, and gives us the ability to use this tool for good. God, the provider, reminds us to: "remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth..." (Deuteronomy 8:18). It is not the Internet, not neoliberal economic models, not globalization or free markets, but our God who provides for us through productive work.

God worked for six days in making the world we live in, and created man in His image to work. The encouragement to work is presented throughout the Scriptures, and the expectation that those who follow God's path for their lives will "work with your hands... so that your life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody" (I Thessalonians 4:11). Jesus taught us to pray "give us this day our daily bread," and work (not alms) is the foundation for the realization of that prayer.

A positive view of business and economics is lacking segments of the Christian sub-culture due to the fear that "the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil" (I Timothy 6:10). The hypothesis of Western economics is that economic activity "benefits consumers and maximizes efficient utilization of the earth's scarce resources." (11) This has not proven to be true in many particular cases, however, as man's sinful nature becomes evident in greed, corruption, and the concentration of resources in the hands of very few. Evil in economic areas is manifested not only in the behavior of individuals, but also in structural evils that preserve the wealth of upper classes. The love of money, not money in and of itself, is evil. Money is merely a resource, and economics a tool for managing it.

We need to recognize that Satan rules the world and has done all he can do to warp and twist economics, just as he has done with sex or other good things God has created. Christians, and especially those in business, should demonstrate a difference by living Kingdom values, especially in the rejection of materialism. Unfortunately, self indulgent economic activity is promoted in some Christian communities as having intrinsic value, with no regards to Christian witness, response to the poor, or any objective except the lifestyle of the "successful Christian." The market place *is* a context

for ministry, but ministry only takes place if the people of God proclaim His word, show love and compassion, exercise stewardship of creation, and engage in spiritual warfare. Whereas involvement in business can be a worthy calling, making money for one's own material status is not inherently Christian, and is criticized by Jesus.

Given the importance of work, the church should acknowledge the value of the role of business people who are gifted entrepreneurs and administrators of productive economic activity. As was cited by one of the speakers at the Latin America CLADE IV meetings, there is a tendency in Christian society to "demonize the businessman, and the economic sector." The article generated by that international leadership conference says, "in the church we need to create a space for the business man, where making money is not an offense for those 'called to the ministry.'" (12) Rather, those with gifts in business should be a blessing. "These hands of mine have supplied my own needs and the needs of my companions," Paul says at the end of his ministry. (Act. 20:34). We need more hands like that.

- Consider the Christian business community as a resource to generate employment and increase incomes.
- Study not only poverty and injustice, but also the role of wealth, creativity, and innovation.
- Promote within the church an awareness of what the business environment is like.
- Provide training of pastors and seminarians about the world of economics.
- Promote open discussion of Kingdom values in the secular world of economics, especially in light of corruption that is so common.
- Distribute information, tools, conference opportunities, books, magazines, etc. related to productive economic activity as a tool for Christian ministry.
- Create networks of Christians involved in economic ministry.
- Document cases of the promotion of economic justice by Christians, at the community level and at the national level.

The Bible contains overwhelming amounts of content on economic justice for the poor. Jesus came to "lift up the humble, and to fill the hungry with good things." (Luke 1:53). There are more poor people today than at any time in history and in many cases they are getting poorer. For example, economists have noted, "Africa, south of the Sahara, accounted for only about 1% of total world trade in the 1990s." (13) It is not even part of the world economy, but is a place where the ministry of economic development is desperately needed. As Christians integrate economic ministry with their outreach, they become part of a movement of social entrepreneurship that exhibits the concept of "doing good" described in the letter to Titus: "Our people must learn to devote themselves to doing what is good, in order that they may provide for daily necessities and not live unproductive lives." (3:14, NIV).

Holistic Economic Development Word and Deed

The context of a business project presents wonderful opportunities for Christian witness. The everyday tensions of a business allow one to see how people relates to their family, to their employees, how they use their time, and their money. The Bible is rich in lessons drawn from the world of business, and it is very easy for an effective Christian teacher to integrate administrative training with faith lessons. Such a perspective, however, requires personnel with a special calling to this holistic ministry.

The economic development program of the Centro Evangelistico Church in Cartagena, Colombia, was started after unsuccessful attempts to get help from other Christian organizations. Many have tried to promote programs related to economic development with Christian non-profit organizations that specialize in this area, but have found that their prospective "clients" do not qualify for loans or assistance. It may be that the potential beneficiaries are not in the right geographic area or do not have sufficient experience or collateral. The phenomenon of "mission creep" seems to take place very quickly in business projects, where the initial goal of integration with the church and focus on the poor can quickly disappear. For whatever reason, outsourcing such programs is often not an alternative, and missions must therefore develop the capacity to implement such programs themselves.

"Mission creep," the loss of the initial vision and purpose for the program, can impact all forms of economic development activity. The focus on helping the needy gradually moves to a wealthier target group, or the emphasis on Christian witness gets diluted, as the economic activity takes on central importance. Instead of becoming a means to help others, these projects can become an end in themselves. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the history of micro finance promoted by Christian organizations, where the livelihood of the service delivery mechanism, the entity providing the loans, has often become more important than the livelihood of the clients: "achieving financial sustainability but having little outreach to poor clients." (14)

This is where participation of Christian professionals and missionaries can be an important element for these programs. Expatriate staff recruited for economic development can result in the creation of a new type of missionary-consultant able to provide these elements of training and assistance, while keeping the focus on Christian witness. These promoters of Kingdom businesses need to assess the viability of economic projects, and promote governance and a staffing structure that is self-reliant. They can also promote ongoing training and relating the business to ministry objectives, utilizing business as their social context for ministry. There is currently a great interest in the potential of economic development and job creation programs for Christian missions. Like programs in health and education, the economic development tools are great resources for ministry outreach, ever more relevant in a world where poverty and unemployment are rampant. The growth of economic enterprise that serves mission also means that there are tremendous needs for a new type of expatriate professional worker: the missionary businessperson.

As stated at the beginning of this chapter, a key element in motivating economic development programs to focus on Christian outreach that include evangelism is for workers, national or expatriate, to reflect on the Good news as the center of God' project. He wants everyone to have a chance to hear the gospel. Our eternal condition is another issue that is natural to discuss with economic programs. Many projects and project principals are very successful. If we provide material and technical assistance that helps someone become wealthy, but do not share with them how they can have a relationship with God through what Christ did on the cross, we run the risk of simply helping them to go to hell in style. After all, the invisible, unseen realities are more important than the visible. (11

Corinthians 4:18). Program managers and staff need to reflect on what the message is that people really need to hear, and if they cannot get excited about the Good News, this may not be their line of work.

They also should consider how this message unites us with other ministries, and with God's other projects in the Church, His body. Some aspects of faith that Christians may NOT talk about are critical to address in economic development programs. For example, take the issue of repentance from sin. One of the most common sources of problems in any economic project is that the funds are stolen. Recognition of the tendency of people to do wrong is built into program design; unethical practices destroy economic projects. So it is quite natural to acknowledge that we all sin, and need God's grace.

A great advantage of promoting economic activity from a Christian perspective is that values that are central to the Christian faith are also critical to business success. In what ways do we expect economic development promoted by churches and Christian communities to be different from other programs? At the very least, we would expect to find an emphasis on Christian values in the workplace.

- If we were helping people who have been exploited to start their own businesses, we would not want them, in turn, to exploit others. We want to promote justice.
- If we believe that we are stewards or managers of God's creation, we will avoid polluting and degrading the environment, be careful to dispose properly of waste, and respect flora and fauna. We want to promote responsible oversight of the world that God made.
- If we believe in the importance of community, the projects we promote will involve participation with others, not a jealousy for technology and markets. We want to promote mutual assistance and cooperation in the workplace.
- If we believe that the invisible world is more important than the visible, we will promote that clients avoid materialism and the love of money. We know that money can buy a bed but not sleep, books but not intelligence, food but not an appetite, jewelry but not beauty, luxuries but not happiness. We wish the best for our clients, and that would be that they would have a personal relationship with the God who created them.
- Confronted with a market system that often alienates the worker, we affirm that God created work with a rich vision of transforming, designing, crafting, producing and providing for others. Every form of work should promote and recognize basic human dignity.
- Confronted with the temptations of wealth, we affirm that our capacities to work and be productive are gift of God, and should be put at God's service.
- Confronted with economic policies that impoverish people and devalue work, especially the work of poor rural people, we affirm that all human beings have the right to a job that allows them to live with dignity as person created in the image of God.

The worker providing consulting assistance to the small businesses are the key factor for communicating a Christian testimony to the clients and participants in an economic development program. These are the people who visit and evaluate projects in the field, or who help organize community banks, and are in contact with managers and clients, and who know personally the people who are involved in the projects. If a clear Christian testimony is desired, the first requirement is to

recruit Christian employees, and then to train them in how they can best minister to the clients and others. Many very good opportunities to counsel people, not only in matters related to their business but also their personal lives, come through addressing problem situations in the small businesses. An effective Christian witness program is one that provide a timely response to people, and a word of counsel in their time of need, whether the issues are related to businesses or other matters.

Commitment to having Christian witness within the program has to begin with top management that not only promotes this orientation, but also provides the resources for its implementation. Too often the Christian nature of economic development programs, and of social programs in general, becomes a well-kept secret, or only a fund-raising tool for certain markets. Some organizations claim that the provision of services for the poor is a Christian witness in itself, and no other expression of faith is necessary. Many promote Christian values at an official level, but do not recruit Christian staff, nor allow time for any type of Christian outreach. Promotion may highlight the concept of "sharing the love of Jesus" yet lack any component in the field that actually mentions Jesus. Program outputs are often measured only in material terms: number of loans, repayment records, jobs created, etc. The invisible realities, or the idea of an eternal destiny, are often not of interest. (15)

In some programs there are evidences of Christian identity that are expressed through institutional requirements. It is common, for example, that meetings be opened with a prayer or a Bible reading, or program staff may be required to attend a weekly devotional session. The problem with these activities, when they are a legalistic prescription for an institutional Christian identity, is that they often demonstrate the opposite of Christian witness. If there is no commitment to living out the faith in the participants, the forced participation in such activities becomes just another hurdle for meeting program requirements, and actually an inoculation that prevents people from a true faith encounter with Christ.

The maintenance of a vibrant Christian vision that is relevant to staff and clients, unlike administrative systems, cannot be implemented by operations manuals and procedures. Program management and board leadership must live and actively promote and conserve this vision. On a practical level this means that Christian outreach must be part of the program. Time must be allowed for Christian ministry. The employees of the program should meet weekly for a time of prayer and Biblical reflection, and also to celebrate what God is doing in the lives of the people that are touched by the program activities. There also should be time set aside to equip and prepare staff to promote times of Biblical reflection with clients, and incorporate Christian witness in the personal counseling and formal training components of the project.

Measurement of program outputs should include the change in people's lives, as they are encouraged in their faith walk. The Christian out reach of the program should be part of management evaluation. Written materials should be developed to promote Christian witness with staff and clients in different contexts, and these should be periodically evaluated and updated.

Training Resources for Christian Witness

There is a great wealth and variety of lessons, stories, and examples in the Bible that can be integrated with all kinds of business experience. For example, Jesus was Himself involved in several types of business activity, and many of the parables are directly related to productive economic activity.

What must be avoided in formal training is a legalistic perspective, with doctrinal or denominational rigidity that excludes people. Assistance should not be conditioned on accepting a certain faith definition, as not even Jesus did this. The presentation of Christian truth should connect with what people already know, and build bridges instead of create barriers. The church is an organization comprised of people from many backgrounds, and the gospel should be presented in a way that can be understood from different social classes, educational backgrounds, or financial levels.

Most economic programs require some type of formal technical training to be successful. It is appropriate that these training sessions begin with a time of Biblical reflection, and that they also offer the participants the opportunity to hear the gospel in terms that they can understand. Some of the basic themes can easily be incorporated into training programs.

Work As Part of the Plan of Creation

The Bible explains that God created the universe. According to the Genesis recounting, God worked for six days, then rested from His work. God created man in His image. Man was created to work as the manager in the world where God had placed him, and this job of being a steward of God's creation existed before sin entered the picture. So the concept of work was part of God's design of the universe; the role of humankind was, in part, to organize and oversee the world that the Divine Worker had created.

The Bible presents work as the means of God's provision for man, even after sin enters the picture, and makes work more difficult. There are many Bible verses that present this truth, but they are not often referred to in sermons heard in the church today, especially in developing countries. The Apostle Paul makes the statement in perhaps his first missionary letter, the epistle to the church in Thessalonica, that they "mind their own business and work with their hands, so that their daily life may win the respect of outsiders and they not be dependent on anyone." (I Thessalonians 4:11-12). This is presented in the context of describing, in this section of the letter, how to live to please God. When the public sector is cutting back, and free market promotion results in capital-intensive investment that also reduces employment, how are people supposed to work with their own hands?

This is where we see the importance of this ministry: the promotion of productive economic activity. Programs that promote viable business activity help people to put into practice the Biblical instruction from I Thessalonians. Whether through the creation of service enterprises, or ministry support business, or business incubator or loans, the intent is to create permanent employment, and generate revenue that provides for daily necessities, and eliminates dependence on handouts. This is what people really want and need.

The Lausanne Covenant, a document describing the agenda for the church in the last part of the 20th century, presented the concept that "humanity was made in God's image, and therefore every person, regardless of race, religion, color, culture, class, sex or age has an intrinsic dignity that should be respected and served." (16) The promotion of productive economic activity is an important aspect of promoting human dignity. Helping people to provide for themselves and their families is a great service opportunity for the church, and should be part of its mission.

It is also part of following Jesus, who also had much to say about the concept of work. In fact, when our Lord was asked to teach us to pray, He included in His model prayer the statement "give us this day our daily bread." He said this long before there were government social welfare projects or child sponsorship from non-profit organizations. Most certainly Jesus was not thinking of handouts when he taught us to pray, but rather of a job to be able to provide for our needs. He knew that work was strategic for the provision of our daily needs, and had a lot of experience Himself in all kinds of economic activity.

The Words and Deeds of Jesus

We clearly see Jesus' understanding of productive economic activity in statements and involvement in some of the key industries of His time:

- **Fishing:** Jesus loved the beach and the sea, and is often found teaching and preaching next to water. He recruits fishermen, and also appears to know and enjoy fishing. For example, in Luke 5:1-7 He tells His friends to "let down your nets for a catch."

Note that in this case Jesus, perhaps looking for a little adventure, is in the boat Himself. When the results of a surprisingly big catch strain the nets, where is Jesus? He is helping to pull in the fishing nets along with the others. He is working alongside the fishermen. Later he uses the picture of the fisherman and his work to present spiritual truths, but in the background it is clear that He understood the fishing business, and liked to associate with people who worked in this business.

- **Agriculture:** Modern textbooks on agricultural production present four basic outcomes of seed germination that are similar, in many ways, to the four cases that Jesus presents in a talk recorded in the gospel records. If the outcomes of Matthew 13:3-8 are considered, we have (1) insufficient soil preparation for seed to take root, (2) inadequate depth of soil for seedling to mature, (3) competitive growth of other organic production preventing proper growth, and (4) adequate conditions for satisfactory production. Jesus is using his analysis of agricultural processes as the basis for presentation of spiritual truths, but in the process also demonstrates an understanding of basic farming. Perhaps lessons like this have become irrelevant in the United States, but in developing countries, the "campesino" or rural farmer who hears of this passage for the first time will often be extremely impressed to see that Jesus understands their world of work.
- **Small animal husbandry:** The same phenomenon, of surprise at how much Jesus knew about a particular line of business, is even truer in relation to the production of sheep. Anyone who visits a sheep farm will be surprised by how well Jesus understood the care of sheep, as He described in John 10:1-6. Jesus understood the role of the shepherd very well, and used this business understanding also to teach spiritual truths.
- **Construction:** When Jesus began His public ministry at 30 years of age, announcing this in the synagogue (Mark 6.1-4), the question was, "Isn't this the carpenter?" The footnote to this passage in the New International Version says that the statement was derogatory, meaning "is he not a common worker with hands like the rest of us?" Jesus had those hardened hands of a

manual laborer, so common among both men and women in developing countries. As we have opportunity to work with such people in ministry, it is good to remember that they have hands like Jesus.

The Greek word for carpenter can include the concept of general construction, not just with wood but with other materials as well, such as stone and adobe. When Jesus says "my yoke is easy and my burden is light" in Matthew 11:30, He is using a picture perhaps drawn from His own experience of making wooden yokes, which had to match carefully the team of oxen for which they were crafted. When He states that the wise man built his house, and "dug deep and laid the foundation on rock," (Luke 6:48) He is perhaps drawing from His own experience in building houses. Indeed, the statement in Luke 14:28-29 about building a tower, but first developing a detailed plan and budget, is very much the type of statement a construction manager would make.

Some Biblical scholars believe that Jesus worked as a building contractor from His adolescence until age 30, when He perhaps turned the business over to a younger brother. We hear nothing about Joseph after Jesus was 12, and the social norm was that the oldest male child in the family was responsible for family support in the event of the death or sickness of the father. It is quite possible that Jesus managed the construction and carpentry enterprise for more than a decade, until other family members could take responsibility for family finances.

Support for this hypothesis is drawn from other substantial evidence that Jesus had direct and intense awareness of the administrative environment of a business.

Should an investment generate a return? Consider the parable of the talents in Luke 19. If one talent was equivalent to three months' salary, that means that the investment being considered here was more than 2 years' salary, a substantial amount. The expectation is that these resources will be put to work, and a return on investment is rewarded.

Are employees usually happy with their pay? The parable of day workers who are employed in the vineyard, in Matthew 20, is presented for a spiritual meaning, but shows an underlying understanding of the problems of personnel management. Though a just wage is paid, comparisons of compensation between workers generate resentment. This even happens in the context of church projects.

What about business ethics? The parable of the unjust administrator who knew he was going to be fired, presented in Luke 16, is proof for many that Jesus knew the internal world of business. When this story is cited in client training in many developing countries, the response is, "Jesus worked in a world just like ours!" So much that happens in the world of commerce is unethical, and Jesus understood this.

The evidence goes on and on. Jesus makes several statements about taxes, none particularly enthusiastic. He mentions cases of oversight of business projects and with parables illustrates situations that seem to come from the business world. When the statement is made in Hebrews 4:15 that "we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are.. ." this sympathy extends also to the world of business. As we promote productive economic activity, and help people to realize the prayer that Jesus made about our daily bread, it is encouraging to know that Jesus, a small business manager himself, understands what we are trying to do.

Principles From the Ministry of the Apostle Paul

The Apostle Paul encourages Christians to follow his example, as he follows Christ. He has a great deal to teach, by word and example, about productive economic activity. His statement was quoted earlier about the expectation that people work with their own hands, to provide for themselves and as a Christian testimony. In his second letter to this same church Paul is even more dogmatic about this concept, saying, "if someone does not work, they should not eat." (II Thessalonians 3:10). The situation is quite relevant to our day, as the church had then, as it does now, social programs to help the needy. But some were taking advantage of these programs that had no right to them, "mooching" off the church.

Paul was a leather worker, as was discussed previously, and used his work to subsidize his missionary outreach. He makes it quite clear in the first letter to the church in Corinth that he believes that the strategy of "preaching the gospel free of charge" is better for his ministry. (I Corinthians 9:18). But he also refers to work as a basic expectation of Christians. For example, in Ephesians 4:28 he states that "he who steals should steal no more, but work with his own hands to provide for himself and also to have something to share with others in need." Again, reading this instruction in the context of the developing world is challenging. Globalization, free markets, and the political environment of the early 21st century seem to be making life for the poor majority worse, instead of better. The Bible says to work, but work is sometimes hard to find.

Taking On the Powers and Principalities

Christian authors write a great deal about the world economy, injustice, and unfair practices that need to be changed. What seems to be missing is a concrete plan for how to live now, and especially how "to work with your own hands," in the meantime.

Christians should be at the forefront of confronting the problem of an economic segment described by secular experts as "the bottom of the pyramid, where four billion people reside whose per capita income is less than \$1,500 per year." (17) The Bible overwhelmingly promotes care for the poor. Jesus came to "lift up the humble, and to fill the hungry with good things" (Luke 1:53). There are more poor people today than ever before in history and in many cases they are getting poorer. The confrontation of this problem is complex, and we should expect, in evaluating economic issues, to encounter trade-offs rather than solutions. This is a key concept, presented decades ago by Harvard professor Ray Vernon in his book *Sovereignty at Bay*, a 1960's analysis of multi national company interaction with countries. Many decades later it seems that many, especially Christians, have expectations of clear-cut solutions for the world economy. As Christian economist Diane Whitmore reminds us, "economic analysis allows us to measure reasonably well who the winners and losers from trade will be, and what they will win or lose. But economics gives us no insights to judge which trade-offs are indeed most 'fair.'" (18)

Whatever one believes about economic systems, the fact is that most people in developing countries live in an environment characterized by injustice and inequality. We need to pray and exert whatever political capital we have to address these problems, but at the same time face reality. It is this type of perspective that motivated the substance abuse recuperation program in Mexico to teach recovered drug addicts and alcoholics to make tortilla presses. They discovered a product that was easy to sell,

that can be made from inexpensive scrap lumber, and produced with simple technologies. This productive economic activity provides for families a respectable means of "working with their own hands."

The problems of the region where these people live are enormous, and due to the proximity to the U.S., many churches from the north respond by bringing down food and clothing to hand out, or with donated services for health and basic education. But what people want is the capacity to earn their daily bread, not have it donated to them, and to pay for their own local medical services.

A comment by Ron Sider should be remembered, especially by theologians who speak to issues of economics: "The reader without a degree in economics probably wishes international economics were less complex or that faithful discipleship in our time had less to do with such a complicated subject." (19) When we consider the topic of economics, the issues are complex. We need to avoid simplistic, theological conclusions often common in many Christian contexts. For example, very important trade-offs exist between liberty and equality. The promotion of freedom highlights individual rights and the free market for maximizing economic production. The promotion of equality would focus more on how wealth was shared, and how profits are distributed. This seemingly complex issue is the foundation of many failed community economic projects: a carpentry shop closes because the four people doing the work get the same compensation as another four who do little work, or a bakery goes bankrupt because no one in the community thinks they need to pay for bread, since the business belongs to the community. The desire that all the benefits be shared (equality) destroys the incentive for those who do the work, or exhausts the capital invested in the project.

One irony of many economic programs started for the church is that they develop to a point where they exclude church members. Working with the church is not easy, and the community that God chose to work with has always been to some extent dysfunctional. The people of Israel started complaining soon after they got their freedom from Egypt, the disciples were occasionally problematic, and Paul had all kinds of struggles with the first leaders of the church. But God uses weak and common people like you and me, instead of the smart, rich, and well-connected crowd. God does this, apparently, to show that His activity in the world comes from Him, not us. So we need to have realistic expectations. Will someone use his or her church affiliation to try to benefit from the program? That happens a lot. Will someone who appears to have integrity turn out to be irresponsible? Count on it.

A special problem for missions and Christian agencies using economic development as a tool for ministry is that they may have a tradition of providing donations. Initial communication that an economic program is different, requiring a pay back of capital, for example, may be traumatic. Usually someone will test the boundaries, and it will be necessary to take action. It is disappointing to realize that people considered spiritual leaders in the context of church meetings could be unethical and irresponsible in the context of a business. This test of Christian commitment may be a good thing, but is also very hard when people fail the test.

On the other hand, it is exciting to see cases where the church has benefited greatly, and expanded its ministry, through economic programs. In a small church in one of the poorest slums of Santo Domingo, the leaders decided to use the community bank concept as an evangelistic tool. They had noticed that most people in the community did not want to enter the church, having no understanding of the music or how to participate in a church service. Many thought that the church was part of a dangerous religious sect.

To promote interaction with the neighbors, an invitation was made, through distributing flyers, of a new program to be started in the church to promote income. It was called the neighborhood village bank, and the methodology was described to all of those attending a first meeting, scheduled during late morning in the church building.

From this small project a solid community bank program was started, with involvement of those in and out of the church. Every meeting begins with a Biblical reflection, but though the pastor and leaders participate, the community group has its own board, incorporation papers, accounts, and even one part-time employee. Over a two-year period, seventeen people from the community have become Christians and joined the church, and others have joined other churches. The image of the church in the community has been completely changed, and it is known for its interest in promoting development for non-members as well as members.

There are many models like this, relatively unknown precisely because they are not dependent on donations, and need no promotion. Economic development is a significant resource for holistic Christian outreach. Creating jobs and improving incomes can be integrated with Biblical teaching and practical discipleship. The business professional can find meaning beyond financial success through programs that promote profits for the poor, and that are integrated with Christian outreach. May God give us wisdom to apply the tools of productive economic activity in the context in which we live today.

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