

COMPASSION LINK

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MINISTRIES



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PURPOSE

This publication is a service of the Assemblies of God World Missions (AGWM) Compassion Ministries Planning Committee with the purpose of providing relevant and current information on theory and practice of compassion ministries in AGWM circles and beyond.

The publication is intended to become a resource link between AGWM regions and ministries, and to offer information to our Assemblies of God churches and constituents, as well.

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EDITOR'S MESSAGE

The journal was proposed by a group of missionary practitioners who feel a need and desire to pursue knowledge and research in the field of compassion work.

Though a great deal of information can be found in books and other periodicals, as well as on web sites, it was felt that having information that came from our own practitioners and theorists would not only be a rich source of information and allow for cross-pollenization of regions, but would also begin to give written record to some of the great things being accomplished in and through compassion ministries work for the Kingdom of God.

It is hoped that the reading audience will find this journal not only a source of information, but also one of inspiration and hope.

—JoAnn Butrin

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ETHICS IN COMPASSION MINISTRIES

By JoAnn Butrin

(Many of these thoughts and ideas were shared in a paper by Charles H. Kraft with some editing by Howard Culbertson. Originally published as a chapter in *Anthropology for Christian Witness*, (Orbis Books © 1996). Used here under the educational fair-use provisions of the 1976 U.S. Copyright Act.)

Introduction

How many missionaries ask themselves, “Is what I am doing, communicating, or teaching, ethical?” It is a difficult and sometimes scary subject, so the question is often not asked. We make assumptions; that what we are doing is right because it makes sense, that what we are doing is wanted and needed, that what we are communicating, including our gospel witness, is being heard as we intended by those who are receiving the action or message (receptors).

This article, much of which is paraphrased or quoted directly

from Charles Kraft of Fuller Theological Seminary, contends that we as missionaries believe that, since we are God-called and sent, we know the answer to the above questions without really even asking. There are people who say that raising questions about God’s work and those who are doing it is meddling and unspiritual. They think that if we are prayerful enough, spiritual enough, and committed enough, then surely God will see to it that things work out well. Paul, on the other hand, gives some guidance on these matters:

“We are allowed to do anything, so they say. ‘We are allowed to do anything’ but not everything is helpful. No one should be looking to his own interests, but to the interests of others” (1 Corinthians 10:23-24).

As Paul approaches the topic of whether or not Christians ought to eat food that has been offered to idols, he asks a basic question: How far can we carry the freedom we have in Jesus Christ? Are we accountable only to God, so that we may do anything we want to do, as

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long as it is moral? Or are we also accountable to other people, such as “those who are weak in faith” (1 Corinthians 8:9)?

Here’s the question: Is the term *ethical* to be defined only in the abstract? Or does the definition get quite specific—relating not only to the motives of the one who does something, but also to the perception of the observer? Paul seems to come down in favor of the latter interpretation when he says, “Well, whatever you do, whether you eat or drink, do it all for God’s glory. Live in such a way as to cause no trouble either to Jews or Gentiles or to the church of God. Just do as I do; I try to please everyone in all that I do, not thinking of my own good, but of the good of all, so that they might be saved. Imitate me, then, just as I imitate Christ” (1 Corinthians 10:31-11:1).

According to Kraft, there are many dedicated, sincere, committed, Spirit-filled people doing the Lord’s work that can come up with very different results, some of which can be questionable and could be labeled big mistakes.

Internationals sometimes look at the work of these sincere, dedicated, prayerful missionaries and ask how things could have come out so badly. At times, missionaries have done everything they could to make sure they were getting the right directions from God, but something went awry. We missionaries have all looked at our own work and sometimes said, “I prayed about this, I thought about it, I read the Scriptures, I did everything I could before I made a given decision or a certain approach. I just don’t understand why it seems to have worked out poorly.”

These kinds of outcomes bring to view the discussion of ethics in mission’s practice. *Ethics*, according to Kraft, is a technical term with a long history of study and discussion in theological circles. Without going into all that discussion, he says that “something is ethical if it is right in God’s sight, and in line with God’s intent. If it is wrong in God’s sight or out of line with God’s intent, we’ll call it unethical.”

The understanding of the hu-

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man processes involved in getting a message across ethically is, of course, no substitute for the spiritual dimensions. The human processes and spiritual dimensions are not, however, mutually exclusive. We cannot say we need either deep spirituality or we need an understanding of the dynamics of ethical communication. We must advocate prayer, sincerity, and commitment, *plus* an understanding of the processes of effective communication. Our intent is that both the power of God—which is available to those who are truly spiritual—and the effective use of human communicational insights will be operative in ways that enable the whole message of God to come out properly at the other end (Kraft, 2002).

Western Perceptions of What Is Good

Often through the lens of our own culture, we tend to define what is good for another culture. If technology works for us and improves our lives in some way, we assume that it would do the same

in another culture. We often teach with expensive computers, projectors, and amazingly well-done PowerPoints, laced with media, and believe that we are transmitting important information in a meaningful way. Though this may be true, we may not fully understand how our visual presentations are being interpreted by, for example, an oral culture. We may also set the bar so high with our technology, that those who might be potential replicators of our message may feel inadequate to do so without the equipment that we have and therefore don't even try to pass it on.

In compassion ministries, we also assume what people need and want and what will make the receptors' lives better. Ethically speaking, *better* would need to be defined by the people affected. However, our Western mindset would have us decide what better is and proceed, thinking that we are being ethical and not realizing that even our view of what is ethical is defined by our own cultural values. Ethical judgments are thus a form of interpretation. They are

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based on world-view assumptions which are rarely the same from culture to culture.

One perspective comes from an old woman in a central African village. “You Europeans think you have everything to teach us. You tell us we eat the wrong food, treat our babies the wrong way, and give our sick people the wrong medicine. You are always telling us we are wrong. Yet, if we had always done the wrong things, we should all be dead. And you see we are not.” (Margaret Read, *Education and Social Change in Tropical Areas*).

Both the givers and receivers of an activity interpret that activity based on their own cultural context. Therefore donors, for example, regularly try to provide, out of the best motives, what they deem as valuable and necessary to the receptor. Westerners, for example, regularly assume that peoples of other societies want what we want: material prosperity, individualism, comfortable housing, schooling, clothing, rapid and effortless transportation, physical health, long life, equality (by our definition) of

women, and even our religion. We assume others are willing to pay the same price to obtain the above commodities.

Thus, we assume others will value individual rights and freedoms over group concerns; material prosperity and creature comforts over family and group solidarity; easy mobility over isolation; mass, information-oriented education in schools over individualized, person-oriented training at home; impersonal, naturalistic medical procedures over personal, supernaturalistic procedures; women who are free (by western definitions) like males over women who are secure; even our religion over their superstition, etc. (Kraft). By making the above assumptions, without knowing if they are true, is in fact, to minister in an unethical fashion.

Toward a Solution

In order to attempt to understand what is truly needed and wanted by the receptors of our concern, it is necessary to value them enough to ask them. It seems

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so simple yet is really profound. When time is taken to form relationships with the people we are trying to help, to know their language and to try to understand their worldview, we gain the right to ask questions. What is it that they most value, what is needed and wanted and what would be the process that would be undertaken by them so that those things they need can happen? How do they perceive that an outsider could help? Taking time and asking these important questions is a start.

One must be aware of the tendency, however, to be viewed by the receptors as the all-powerful one and that answers to these questions may be given by the receptor as a way of trying to please or appease the missionary or donor. Until trust in the giver is truly established by the receptor, true dialogue will be difficult. Some possible helps to avoid unethical ministry or practice are:

A. Practice the Golden Rule—

We are to treat others as we ourselves would like to be treated, were we in their

position. This means we are to seek to understand, respect, and relate to a people and their way of life in the same way that we would like them to understand, respect, and relate to us and our way of life, if the tables were turned. It also means that we need to find out from them how they would like to be treated, what their (not our) definition of understanding, respect, and love, is, and to treat them that way (Kraft, 2002).

B. Become a Learner and Listener—

As we approach any ministry in a culture different than our own, ethical behavior would have us listen and learn. If we approach our assignment as a life-long learner and listen carefully to what is being said, (understanding that what we hear in words may not be what is really being communicated), we will become more effectively able to establish reciprocal communication that is understood. If the language is not native to the outsider, then considerable time will need to

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be spent, not only learning the language of the culture we are in, but learning the contextual meaning of the words in the relevant culture. Understanding non-verbal communication from their cultural perspective would also be a critical component of effective dialogue.

C. Receptor Participation—

Rather than assuming what is needed and wanted, establish relationships, build trust and then engage in dialogues that result in a two-way understanding of what is needed and wanted, how it would be proposed to happen, who would do what, and what the hoped for outcomes would be. This helps to avoid cultural assumptions on both sides, but takes time and intention by the givers and receivers. (It is so much easier and more immediately gratifying to just give something as in a message or material goods.)

D. Participatory Assessment—

Whether formally or informally, it is important that,

together with the persons receiving our intervention, we undertake an assessment of the current situation, the assets of the people who will be involved, a survey of what is already being done, and then a look at the needs and their underlying causes. The last phrase, underlying causes, is a critical piece to the assessment that often illuminates the direction that should be pursued. It may be revealing even to those of the inside culture. Together it can be decided just how this should be carried out, by whom and who will benefit from the information obtained.

E. Establishing Realistic Expectations—

It is so important to the well-being of any relationship that expectations of all parties involved be clearly articulated and then understood. Many times, those who intervene in another society are perceived—both by the receptors and by themselves—as more powerful than those they seek to change. Whether

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it is the power of political relationships, of wealth, of cultural prestige, or of that which comes from God, they can be tempted to use such power to achieve what they define as worthy ends. It is very easy for them to miss or misunderstand the significance of, for example, rapid agreement from the receptor group to what was intended as merely a suggestion. Westerners must learn to perceive such situations as characterized by unequal power relationships and to lean over backward to attempt to compensate (Kraft, 2002).

Conclusion

In order to assure that we are ministering in an ethical fashion it is good to periodically examine the questions:

- What is our intent?
- What are the receptors at the other end really getting?
- Is there anything we can do along the way, any mid-course corrections when we see our

programs misleading people, to make sure that what they understand is closer to what God intends?

We ask these questions seriously. If the work we are called to is as important as we believe it to be, we must regularly examine our motives and assumptions. We can't always assume that our motives line up with God's, or that they are understood properly, or that they are even the same as those we started with.

If we intend to be ethical, we will need to do what we do with a primary concern that it be done so that *God's intent is perceived by the receptors*. The meanings intended by God must be communicated in ways appropriate to the receiving people and understood by them, at least approximately, as He intended them to be understood. If this is to happen, the communications will not be limited to verbal messages. There will be certain concomitants of the words spoken and the deeds done, such as love, personalness, and respect for both receptors and their sociocultural context (Kraft, 2002).

WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF...

The purpose of this section is to present a few ethical questions for consideration. There is not always a right or wrong answer, but certainly some issues that missionaries, donors and nationals face from time to time. The question is, “*What would you do?*”

We would like you to write your thoughts, responses, answers and “what YOU would do” to the following email address: info@compassionlink.org. Your name does not need to appear and will not be published unless you specifically wish for it to be. We will summarize the results in the next edition of *CompassionLink Journal*. We really want to hear from you, so please drop a few lines with your ideas. Please refer to the scenario that you are responding to by number.

Scenario One

A missionary receives a call from a donor saying that their church would like to come and rescue some prostitutes or at least visit with them in the brothel. The

Women’s Ministries group has made some bracelets, quilts and knitted some items for the children. They would like to be able to distribute those.

You live in a country where the brothels are dangerous. The nationals and your missionary group have been working there and developed relationships with some of the women. Some have even come out and come to faith and are now in other occupations.

How would you respond to the church? Are there ways that they could be involved? What would you do?

Scenario Two

There are a large number of HIV/AIDS orphans in the area where you work as a missionary. The national church has felt that they should do something to help and following the pattern that they have seen, they have decided to start an orphanage. They have come to you for help. They would like a building team from the USA to erect the building, and

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they would like you to request missionaries or associates to come and work in the orphanage.

How would you respond to the national church who is requesting this? Is it a feasible plan? Why or why not? What would you do?

Scenario Three

Your local USA church would like to begin thinking more outwardly and has decided to start a food pantry for the neighborhood. Because you are on the benevolence committee of your church, the board has asked you to give input and consider heading it up, recruiting volunteers, etc.

What are your thoughts about food pantries? Is this the best type of outreach for the neighborhood? What kind of questions might you ask or suggestions you might make? What would you do?

Scenario Four

You are a new missionary and have just finished language school. You've just been notified that your shipment has arrived at the port and you are excited to

go and collect your things. When you reach the port city, you are constantly rebuffed when trying to clear your items through customs. Finally the official comes right out and asks for a bribe in order to release your shipment.

What would you do in this situation? Are there times when this is acceptable, and is this one of those times?

Scenario Five

You are a missionary in a culture where the people worship many gods. A medical team comes and as they are seeing patients they are sharing the gospel. When they ask people to pray to receive Christ, almost everyone does. You know that most are just being polite or are content to add another god to their list. But the team is elated and are going home saying that hundreds got saved during the clinic.

What kind of questions might you ask or suggestions you might make? What would you do? What would you do?

(continued on page 30)

AS AN ATHEIST, I TRULY BELIEVE AFRICA NEEDS GOD

*From The London Times—
December 27, 2008*

Missionaries, not aid money, are the solution to Africa's biggest problem—the crushing passivity of the people's mindset.

By Matthew Parris

Before Christmas, I returned, after 45 years, to the country that as a boy I knew as Nyasaland. Today it's Malawi, and The Times Christmas Appeal includes a small British charity working there. Pump Aid helps rural communities to install a simple pump, letting people keep their village wells sealed and clean. I went to see this work.

It inspired me, renewing my flagging faith in development charities. But travelling in Malawi refreshed another belief, too: one I've been trying to banish all my life, but an observation I've been unable to avoid since my African childhood. It confounds my ideological beliefs, stubbornly refuses

to fit my world view, and has embarrassed my growing belief that there is no God.

Now a confirmed atheist, I've become convinced of the enormous contribution that Christian evangelism makes in Africa: sharply distinct from the work of secular NGOs, government projects and international aid efforts. These alone will not do. Education and training alone will not do. In Africa, Christianity changes people's hearts. It brings a spiritual transformation. The rebirth is real. The change is good.

I used to avoid this truth by applauding—as you can—the practical work of mission churches in Africa. It's a pity, I would say, that salvation is part of the package, but Christians black and white, working in Africa, do heal the sick, do teach people to read and write; and only the severest kind of secularist could see a mission hospital or school and say that the world would be better without

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it. I would allow that if faith was needed to motivate missionaries to help, then, fine: but what counted was the help, not the faith.

But this doesn't fit the facts. Faith does more than support the missionary; it is also transferred to his flock. This is the effect that matters so immensely, and which I cannot help observing.

First, then, the observation. We had friends who were missionaries, and as a child I stayed often with them; I also stayed, alone with my little brother, in a traditional rural African village. In the city we had Africans who had converted and were strong believers working for us.. The Christians were always different. Far from having cowed or confined its converts, their faith appeared to have liberated and relaxed them. There was a liveliness, a curiosity, an engagement with the world—a directness in their dealings with others—that seemed to be missing in traditional African life. They stood tall.

At 24, travelling by land across the continent reinforced this im-

pression. From Algiers to Niger, Nigeria, Cameroon and the Central African Republic, then right through the Congo to Rwanda, Tanzania and Kenya, four student friends and I drove our old Land Rover to Nairobi.

We slept under the stars, so it was important as we reached the more populated and lawless parts of the sub-Sahara, that every day we find somewhere safe by nightfall. Often near a mission.

Whenever we entered a territory worked by missionaries, we had to acknowledge that something changed in the faces of the people we passed and spoke to: something in their eyes, the way they approached you direct, man-to-man, without looking down or away. They had not become more deferential towards strangers—in some ways less so—but more open.

This time in Malawi it was the same. I met no missionaries. You do not encounter missionaries in the lobbies of expensive hotels discussing development strategy documents, as you do with the big NGOs. But instead I noticed that

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a handful of the most impressive African members of the Pump Aid team (largely from Zimbabwe) were, privately, strong Christians. Privately because the charity is entirely secular and I never heard any of its team so much as mention religion while working in the villages. But I picked up the Christian references in our conversations. One, I saw, was studying a devotional textbook in the car. One, on Sunday, went off to church at dawn for a two-hour service.

It would suit me to believe that their honesty, diligence and optimism in their work were unconnected with personal faith. Their work was secular, but surely affected by what they were. What they were was, in turn, influenced by a conception of man's place in the universe that Christianity had taught.

There's long been a fashion among Western academic sociologists for placing tribal value systems within a ring fence, beyond critiques founded in our own culture: "theirs" and therefore best for "them," authentic and of intrinsically equal worth to ours.

I don't follow this. I observe that tribal belief is no more peaceable than ours; and that it suppresses individuality. People think collectively; first in terms of the community, extended family and tribe. This rural-traditional mindset feeds into the "big man" and gangster politics of the African city: the exaggerated respect for a swaggering leader, and the (literal) inability to understand the whole idea of loyal opposition.

Anxiety—fear of evil spirits, of ancestors, of nature and the wild, of a tribal hierarchy, of quite everyday things—strikes deep into the whole structure of rural African thought. Every man has his place and, call it fear or respect, a great weight grinds down the individual spirit, stunting curiosity. People won't take the initiative, won't take things into their own hands or on their own shoulders.

How can I, as someone with a foot in both camps, explain? When the philosophical tourist moves from one world view to another he finds—at the very moment of passing into the new—that he loses the language

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to describe the landscape to the old. But let me try an example: the answer given by Sir Edmund Hillary to the question: Why climb the mountain? “Because it’s there,” he said.

To the rural African mind, this is an explanation of why one would not climb the mountain. It’s... well, there. Just there. Why interfere? Nothing to be done about it, or with it. Hillary’s further explanation—that nobody else had climbed it—would stand as a second reason for passivity.

Christianity, post-Reformation and post-Luther, with its teaching of a direct, personal, two-way link between the individual and God, unmediated by the collective, and unsubordinate to any other human being, smashes straight through the philosophi-

cal/spiritual framework I’ve just described. It offers something to hold on to those anxious to cast off a crushing tribal groupthink. That is why and how it liberates.

Those who want Africa to walk tall amid 21st-century global competition must not kid themselves that providing the material means or even the knowhow that accompanies what we call development will make the change. A whole belief system must first be supplanted.

And I’m afraid it has to be supplanted by another. Removing Christian evangelism from the African equation may leave the continent at the mercy of a malign fusion of Nike, the witch doctor, the mobile phone and the machete.

Visit the CompassionLink web site for more articles and helpful resources, including numerous related web sites. The URL is <http://www.compassionlink.org>.

GIVING DEFINITION TO SOCIAL JUSTICE

Purpose

The purpose of this short paper is to give clarity to the definition of *social justice* in the context of Assemblies of God World Missions. There are many uses of the term social justice in the broad church world and from testimonials. It appears that many are using the term as they attempt to address the symptoms of social injustice without an understanding of the systems and structures from which the injustice ultimately originates. This paper attempts to differentiate between compassionate acts and addressing social justice. The intention is to be a starting point for AGWM missionaries and nationals dealing with injustice in their particular context. The reference guide at the conclusion of the paper will allow for further in-depth study of the issues of social justice.

The Problem of Injustice

Without looking far from one's own back door, injustice can be

observed. Abuse, neglect, sexual exploitation, racism, and inequality between genders are just a few that are readily observed. The list grows longer as the unjust aspects of HIV/AIDS, malnutrition, inequities in access to health care and education, the marginalization of those with disabilities and the many nuances of poverty are seen throughout the world.

Injustice happens, according to Haugen (1999) of International Justice Mission, when power is abused and people are prevented from living life to the full as God has intended. Injustice results in poverty, oppression and persons being marginalized by society. It prevents people from living in harmony with God and with each other. The Scripture makes it clear that God hates injustice and oppression (Psalm 11:5) and loves righteousness and justice (Psalms 11:7; 103:6). He wants His people to work against the powers, both seen and unseen, that are evil and cause pain and suffering. He desires that the

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chains of injustice be broken and lives transformed through His redeeming power.

Proverbs 31:8, 9—Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy.

Zechariah 7:9, 10—Administer true justice, show mercy and compassion... do not oppress the widow, fatherless, aliens, poor.

Isaiah 10:1,2—Woe to those who make unjust laws, issue oppressive decrees, deprive the poor of their rights, withhold justice, etc.

Luke 4:18,19—The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim freedom... to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

(All above scriptures are taken from NIV)

Social Justice

Social injustice occurs when

persons in a similar culture or context do not have access or equal access to necessary resources. Social justice from a Christian's perspective is concerned with the transformation of structures and institutions into a moral and ethical design that God intended, so that all persons can experience wholeness in every aspect of their lives (Butrin, 2010).

God's Design

In order to be faithful to what God would have for His people and in order to minister holistically, the church—its saved, restored, reconciled, spirit-filled members—need to be involved in fighting injustice (Butrin, 2010). “He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God” (Micah 6:8, NIV).

Jesus' approach to power and authority was and is different from the approach that most of the world demonstrates. He associated with the marginalized; ac-

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cepted all those he met with love and open arms regardless of their social or spiritual condition. He challenged corruption, hypocrisy and injustice and was not afraid to speak out against the wrong in the Jewish community. However, at the same time, He taught servanthood, love for one's enemies, and obedience to the state (even if it caused hardship), as long as its mandates were not in opposition to the Word of God. He modeled a non-violent approach and taught that God's law was the standard on which each would be judged. His message was reconciliation to God, which ultimately will bring reconciliation to others (Gordon & Evans, 2002).

Psalm 140:12—I know that the Lord secures justice for the poor and upholds the cause of the needy.

Proverbs 22:22, 23—Do not exploit the poor because they are poor and do not crush the needy in court, for the Lord will take up their case...

Prov. 28:5—Evil men do not understand justice, but those who seek the Lord understand it fully.

(All above scriptures are taken from NIV)

Systemic and structural issues go deep and wide and long into the fabric of a society. They govern, provide policy, dictate mores, as well as written and unwritten laws. They are the filters that decide what will stand, what will be corrupt, who will receive what and how it will be received. In that they go deep, wide and long, change in structures and systems requires time, knowledge of the culture, the context, and the people. Change requires building relationships over time and usually is best led by persons of the culture who truly understand the system. And of utmost importance, systemic transformation as God intends, requires that the hearts of those who make up the systems and structures are turned to Christ.

When the church, its members and partners stand together, work together, care about community issues, and attack injustice together, their strength is multiplied against injustice. Most successful interventions against injustice occur when numbers of people stand in unity together, relying

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on the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Compassion Ministries and Social Justice

Many persons have begun to use the term *social justice* as a way of speaking about compassion outreach, which is not a correct use of the term. Compassion outreach, according to Cannon (2009), responds to the effects of the problems of injustice. Social justice, on the other hand, addresses their systemic causes. For example, if a group of people are extremely hungry, the immediate compassionate response would be to feed them, or offer relief. A second type of response, once people are no longer collapsing from hunger, would be to begin to help them help themselves and through a series of assessments, figure out how they can establish ways to produce and procure food. This would be referred to as *development*. The social justice initiative would look at the reason why the food was unavailable. It would search for a systemic or

structural reason that was keeping food from getting to this group of people and when found, would work at changing the unjust system. Social action, therefore, refers to the process of undertaking the activities involved in policy changes, such as lobbying, political activity, rallying for a cause, etc. and is a term very closely aligned to social justice.

Practical Guidelines for Missionary Involvement in Social Justice

There are many ways that missionaries can be involved with promoting social justice. It is important, however, for missionaries to understand their context—the views and desires of the national church, who will be the main voice in advocacy for change, and the views and operations of the governments of the countries in which missionaries reside. The following questions may be asked:

1. What is the status of the national church (recognized, established body, illegal gathering, etc.)?

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2. What is the relationship of the national church to the government (respected, tolerated, strained, animosity, etc.)?
3. How does the government rule (democracy, Marxist, socialist, etc.)?
4. What are the cultural realities of the government (formal processes, friendships, behind closed doors, etc.)?
5. What are the priorities and vision of the national church?
6. What are the cultural realities of the local church (corruption, tradition, prejudices, divisions, etc.)?
7. Who are the stakeholders for social justice within the government and the national church—the key leaders whose influence will advance social justice?
8. What is the capacity of the church to promote social justice?

Practical Involvement in Fighting Against Injustice

The answers to the above questions will help to determine which of the following actions may be considered most appropriate:

- A. *Prayer.* All persons can commit to interceding on behalf of those who are suffering injustice. Prayer vigils, prayer walks, prayer groups, and intercessory prayer are all vital for these important issues to be turned around. Before any initiative or specific intervention is undertaken, directive prayer is essential. Ephesians 6 states that “Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world” (verse 12, NIV), and specific armor for spiritual battle is given and needed when taking up the fight against injustice. Very specific direction and guidance from the Lord will be needed and those going to fight injustice head on will need the power of the Holy Spirit and spiritual discernment. This work cannot be done without prayer.

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B. *Evangelism and Discipleship.* Spreading the good news of Jesus from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth is the mandate of the Church and certainly the mission of the Church. Changing hearts is the starting point in righting relationships and changing evil to good. Changed lives should equal changed communities and changed societies, but until Jesus returns and Satan is taken captive, evil will remain in the world and injustice will need to be fought. Though bringing people to Christ and spreading the good news is the foremost mission of the Church, it is not the only mission and not the only answer to the problem of evil that confronts the Church and the world.

Once people have come to Christ, they need to be strengthened and grounded in the knowledge of Him. Those in Bible school settings should receive training in justice issues and they, in turn, should encourage these issues to be

a mandate of the church and offer training as necessary.

C. *Compassionate Care.* It has been shown in the Scriptures given earlier in the paper that part of the mandate of the church is to act in responsible ways to the needs of those who are suffering.

Retaining the dignity of individuals by enabling and empowering their capacity and helping people to help themselves is part of justice for the poor. As people and communities are strengthened, the poor and voiceless are also strengthened, thus increasing their ability to stand up for themselves when injustice comes their way.

When the church and community stand together, work together, care about community issues, and attack injustice together, their strength is multiplied against injustice. Most successful interventions against injustice occur when numbers of people stand in unity together.

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When compassionate care is administered in holistic fashion, Kingdom values are upheld and the love of Jesus communicated, relationships are infused with a new dimension of understanding. A unity of heart and Spirit-anointing from above takes on the supernatural ability to stand against the evils that prevail.

D. *Becoming the Voice for the Voiceless.* The church is well-positioned to become an advocate for persons who are without power or voice in their context. Examples of this would be persons with disabilities, immigrants, refugees, widows and orphans and many others. The ministry of Christ and the ministry of the church is that of reconciliation. It is one of breaking down the walls between church and community—the walls that would separate church from neighbor. By our inclusion of those without voice, a very large wall is taken down and our welcoming attitude of all who come

creates the safe harbor that Jesus intended the church to be. If reconciliation and healing are to happen, persons who are voiceless must be able to come inside the walls and if they cannot come, the church must go to them.

An example of this would be ministry to persons with disabilities. One of the first steps of advocacy is the very inclusion of the disabled into the life of the church. By making small changes even in building structures so that wheelchair access and other accessibility issues can be accomplished is a statement of welcome and acceptance to the church community. The church can also be sure that persons with hearing and visual impairments have provisions during the service so that they can enter into worship. An attitude of open arms and acceptance speaks to the community and to families that these are people of value to the community of believers and to God; people to be included in the life of the

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church. Persons of influence politically in the church can lobby for equal opportunities, and the church can join together in these types of policy decisions that make life better for those with disabilities. If people with disabilities are in any way excluded from the body of Christ, it would seem that according to the Scripture, the body is not complete (1 Corinthians 12:12).

E. *Relationship Building at Community Levels.* In order to have influence over issues that matter and ultimately over justice issues, it is imperative that Christians and the local church have relationships with decision makers, and ultimately become decision makers. When the church and community are in good relationship and begin working together on projects for the betterment of the community, good relationships with community leaders are bound to occur. Eventually Christians are going to begin to take positions of leader-

ship within the community structures. This begins to give voice to decisions which positively affect justice issues at a local level and ultimately can begin to affect decisions at upper levels of policy makers.

F. *Advocacy.* Advocacy in its simplest form is using one's voice, influence and resources for the betterment of a people or situation. Advocacy can offer good news of the message being preached by demonstrating Spirit-led practical actions that result in positive change. A church in India, for example, recently advocated for a change in the laws which govern child labor. Missionaries can use advocacy as a means of bringing about positive social change, though caution is advised. An example of this is to advocate for the local church to care for those with HIV/AIDS in their community.

Approaches to Avoid when Addressing Justice Issues

Jesus modeled the way in which injustices should be addressed. *To demonstrate a Christ-like spirit and attitude is essential to the process of bringing about positive change.* Some of the approaches to injustice that should be avoided are:

- Using one's own cultural values in determining what is socially unjust and how it should be righted in a cross-cultural context.
- Assuming that others are willing to pay the price or take the risk to make right the injustice.
- Assuming one's words and activities are understood in the way that was intended.
- Putting the national church at risk by any of our words or actions, which include social networking, texts, emails, newsletters or any forms of media.

Conclusion

This document has been de-

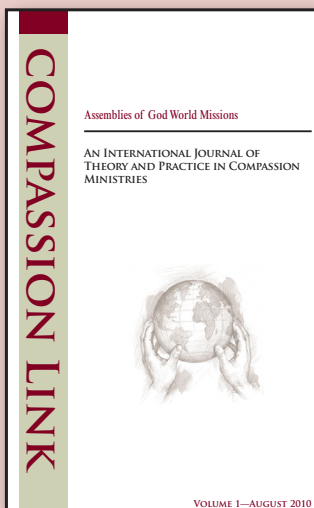
veloped as an attempt to assist missionaries as they confront social injustice in their ministry context. Every missionary should look to the national persons with whom they work for guidance and counsel in dealing with any social justice issue. It is assumed that actions toward change would be best carried out in most situations by the national church. People who know and understand the culture and context, joining together for a cause, have a greater chance of effectuating positive change. The missionary, empowered by the Holy Spirit, should engage in seeking social justice not as an end to itself, but as an extension of God's call on his or her life.

Paper compiled by AGWM Focus Group (JoAnn Butrin, Bob McGurty, Deb Highfill, Karen Herrera, Diane Campbell, John Knutti, Peg Knutti, Dodey Files, Cynthia Nicholson).

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FOCUS ON HUMAN TRAFFICKING— LATIN AMERICA

In the Dominican Republic the issue of sex trafficking was introduced to a group of young people who worked with King's Castle Ministries, an evangelism ministry that works with children and youth. They were challenged to bring awareness to their community about trafficking in effort to prevent it from happening. They took on the challenge and created a couple of human videos which appropriately depicted the issue of commercial sexual exploitation. These human videos were presented with the outreach that is normally done in presenting the salvation message. After the drama was presented the issue was addressed in how it was affecting the country and their community. The presenter would talk to the children about safe touches and the importance of telling trusted adults when bad things happened. Then the presenter would address parents and guardians and how important it was to protect the children

and women from this danger. Not only was awareness brought to communities through this, but the church began to address the issue as well.

Responding to a need cannot be expected to happen if the need is not truly known or understood. As followers of Christ, it seems logical to us that active response to felt needs is just a part of life. However, this is not the case in many areas of the world (including the U.S.). We hear news reports in our respective countries about atrocities and yet ... how does one respond? How can and should the church respond to trafficked, at-risk and prostituted women, as well as those who live with HIV and AIDS? In Argentina we have a group of five ladies from Instituto Biblico Rio de la Plata here in Buenos Aires who have been called of God to take His love to the lost. Each week we pray together mid-week and walk the streets of two different sites of

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our particular zone praying as a group (silently) ... praying for the oppressed to be set free... for the hearts, and souls of the women and girls to be healed. One girl, Maria, from Mexico was asking God how to reach into the lives of the ladies He was calling her to in her own country. She is here at IBRP studying ... and felt that she wanted to be on the team who prays and walks... she is! By investing in prayer walks and active exposure to compassionate living ... she has come to view the “lost” in a slightly different light. Taking the compassionate love of Christ to the streets weekly... building presence in the neighborhoods, and walking and praying the streets of those neighborhood has given Maria a new concept of living out the compassion and love and salvation of Christ.

When the disciples walked the street and as their shadows fell on the sick, the sick were healed. My prayer is that through constant exposure to prayer walks and the empowerment of events like “Pasión por la compasión” the body of Christ will grow exponentially. The event addresses trafficking, prostitution, GLBT lifestyle choices, and HIV/AIDS as it relates to both sectors of society.

Using the biblical approach allows us to step into the lives of those who are hurting and point them to the one who can give them hope and change their lives forever. Our prayer is that amore and more ladies like Maria will seek God and be used in their own cultural context to bring health, healing and wholeness to those who suffer.

SAVE THE DATES!

Compassion Forum: *August 17–20, 2011*

Forum on Human Trafficking: *August 15–17, 2011*

Both events will be held in Kansas City, Missouri. For more information and to register, visit our web site: www.compassionlink.org.

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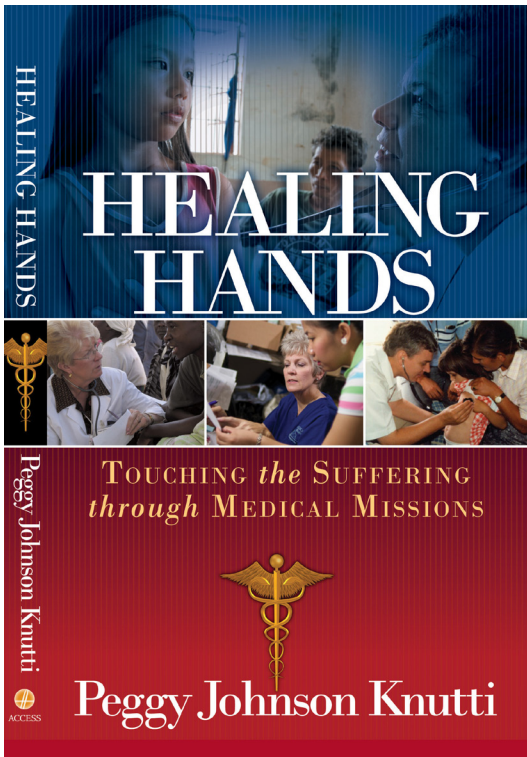
(continued from page 12)

Scenario Five

A young girl has been so touched by the issue of trafficking that she wants to come and spend six months in the brothel. What would you do?

Scenario Six

A donor has come to visit your project. He is so touched and he wants to give \$25,000. The thing he wants to give to ties into some problem areas and is very low on your priority list. How are you going to respond?



Healing Hands—Touching the Suffering Through Medical Missions can be ordered online—the web site is given below. The cover price is \$15 including shipping, and can be paid by credit card or check.

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BOOK REVIEW: HEALING HANDS—TOUCHING THE SUFFERING THROUGH MEDICAL MISSIONS

Peggy Johnson Knutti (Access books, 135pp., paperback)

In the summer of 2009, HealthCare Ministries celebrated its 25th anniversary of medical evangelism. Through the years, their workers and volunteers have brought Jesus' compassionate touch to hundreds of thousands of people. Not one of them will ever be the same—not after having been exposed to the awesome hand of a loving God.

In this excellent book, active-retired HealthCare Ministries missionary Peggy Johnson-Knutti captures the journey of this ministry and the stories of the people instrumental in its creation.

The author skillfully depicts the obstacles and struggles as the Division of Foreign Missions and other leaders in the Assemblies of God began the process of establishing a formal medical missions program. These leaders were concerned that establishing a medical missions ministry would open

the door to the social gospel, but they also sensed God's Spirit directing them, and they opened their hearts to His purpose. As a result, HCM has developed into an effective short-term medical evangelism outreach. Knutti shares many stories to document this effectiveness that has brought not only physical healing through medical missions and the miraculous power of God, but also how the gospel changed lives.

Knutti tells of the unique passion that each director brought to HealthCare Ministries, as well as the miracles that kept HealthCare Ministries alive. The author concludes: "When one looks back over the past 25 eventful years, one can only stand in amazement at the faithfulness of God—individually and collectively!"

—Reviewed by Deborah M. Highfill, Ph.D., director, HealthCare Ministries, Springfield, Missouri.

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