

Chapter 20

Loving God and Your Neighbor: The Influence of Charity and Mercy Ministry upon Society

By G. Stephen Goode

Jesus calls us both to preach and live the gospel. Steve Goode explains the biblical foundations and historical significance of mercy ministry. His stories demonstrate love in action in an astounding variety of situations.

[[ex]]“The meaning of my life is the love of God. It is Christ in his distressing disguise whom I love and serve.” —Mother Theresa¹[[/ex]]

[[ex]] The LORD...remains faithful forever.

He upholds the cause of the oppressed and

gives food to the hungry.

The LORD sets prisoners free,

the LORD gives sight to the blind,

the LORD lifts up those who are bowed down,

the LORD loves the righteous.

The LORD watches over the alien

and sustains the fatherless and the widow (Psalm 146:6–10) [[/ex]]

[[ex]]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)[[/ex]]

[[ex]]“You are the salt of the earth.” (Matthew 5:13)[[/ex]]

[[ex]]“You are the light of the world.” (Matthew 5:14)[[/ex]]

[[ex]]“Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.” (Matthew 5:16)[[/ex]]

[[ex]]“Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.”
(Matthew 25:40)[[/ex]]

Ly Suan was abandoned by his mother at age six to live on the streets of Phnom Penh, Cambodia. To survive street life, he joined a gang, became a pickpocket and a thief. He quickly learned that his life would be short unless he somehow got off the streets. One day, he met a Catholic priest who ran a home for street boys. The priest was initially wary of accepting Ly Suan into the home because he was a known troublemaker. But after much pleading and many promises, Ly Suan was able to escape life on the streets. This was his first encounter with Christians. He liked studying, learned five languages easily, and used his hands cleverly. Ly Suan remembers one prayer from that time: “Lord have mercy upon me and my poor family.” God heard this prayer for Ly Suan’s family and for thousands of other Khmer families.

This chapter describes how God hears and responds to the cries of a boy. Indeed, Ly Suan’s story will be interwoven among the sections of this chapter as one example of God’s redeeming love. YWAM has had a tripartite focus from its beginning in 1960—evangelism, training, and mercy ministry. Mercy ministries meet the practical felt needs of people, families,

and communities primarily through deeds. What does this have to do with discipling nations? When individuals, families, and churches love their neighbors, change occurs in society.

Several aspects of mercy ministry will be reviewed: its biblical foundation and history; how it shapes our view of the world; its influence upon society; and its role in extending the kingdom of God.

Our world is confronted today with two billion people living in or just above absolute poverty,² global health issues and disease, under- or unemployment, children at risk, family breakdown, war, terrorism, and crime. God is not silent. He hears and he weeps. He is moved. He acts, sometimes supernaturally, but mostly by using ordinary people. He sent Jesus as a compassionate, loving response. Today, Jesus' words to us ring loudly, "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you" (John 20:21)—to love individuals, families, and communities who have not heard. Jesus' commandments are to "Go into all the world and preach the Good News to everyone" (Mark 16:15 NLT) and "make disciples of all nations...teaching them to obey all I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:19–20). His commands are summarized by the Great Commandment to love God and our neighbor (Matt. 22:37–40). How do we fulfill God's requirements for us today? How will this response to the Great Commandment affect nations? Let's explore some possibilities.

[level 1]The Biblical Foundation of Mercy Ministry—Go and Do Likewise

Biblical examples of mercy ministries abound. Probably the best known is the story of the good Samaritan. An expert of the law questioned Jesus about eternal life. Jesus went to the heart of the issue through a story.

A Samaritan man, belonging to a people considered the sworn enemy of the Jews, came upon a man robbed and beaten. The Samaritan was moved with compassion and responded with help, in contrast to two religious Jews, who had previously walked past and done nothing. This Samaritan got involved in the emergency through medical care, transport, lodging, finances, and follow-up until the man was out of danger.

Jesus questioned the legal scholar, “Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?” The expert in the law replied, ‘The one who had mercy on him.’ Jesus told him, ‘Go and do likewise’” (Luke 10:36–37).

This parable raises a number of questions about our view of life and about the intersection of our faith and its practical outworking in our daily affairs. Mercy ministry is about the practical application of our faith upon people and society. Timothy J. Keller wrote:

Obviously, there was no “ministry of mercy” per se before the fall of man since there was no human suffering or need. But it is clear that God’s servants at that time were as concerned with the material-physical world as with the spiritual. After the Fall, the effects of sin immediately caused the fragmentation of man’s relationships. Man becomes alienated from God. (Gen. 3:10). As a result his relationship with other human beings is shattered (vv. 12–13), and so is his relationship with nature itself (vv. 17–18). Now sickness, hunger, natural disaster, social injustice and death dominate. The first act of mercy ministry immediately follows the Fall: God clothed Adam and Eve with animal skins (Gen. 3:21). Man now needed protection from a hostile environment.³

Are we willing to go and do likewise? As we do, our societies will be affected like yeast or like salt and hopefully will be transformed.

[level 1]The Historical Impact of Mercy Ministries on Society

Volumes have been written regarding the historical impact of mercy ministry. For example, in 1849, Mr. C. Schmidt, a professor of theology at Strasbourg, wrote about the early Christian impact on the Roman world in the first century. Christianity was at first small and totally surrounded by different religious beliefs and worldviews. “But though hidden and incomplete, this influence was also efficacious and unmistakable. At the time of all great changes in the history of the world, new ideas float in the atmosphere. One receives them without knowing how. They affect even those who resist them, until at last they leaven and transform the whole of society.”⁴ A new social principle had emerged—love.⁵ The Roman Empire, indeed, the world, would never again be the same.

Martin Palmer’s book *The Jesus Sutras*⁶ documents the effect of the gospel of charity starting from the church in Antioch, or the so-called missionary church, as it moved along the silk route into Central Asia and eventually into the Taoist world of China. In AD 635 the Emperor of the Tang Dynasty opened the door for the church in almost every Chinese province, and perhaps every city, for two hundred years.

This practical love continued to make tangible influence upon society throughout the centuries. St. Francis of Assisi said in the eleventh century, “Preach the gospel and sometimes use words.”⁷ He was underlining the fact that meeting practical needs was at the heart of the gospel. The Franciscan ministry began with a call to those of financial means to voluntarily give up their wealth in service to the poor and to focus on serving the outcasts of their day—lepers.

An assessment of the past 200 years of church history, revivals, and reformations, also shows how deeply the gospel and the people of God, the church, have influenced civil society and its institutions. Charles Colson wrote, “At one point in the early nineteenth century in

America, there were more than eleven hundred Christian societies working for social justice. Today, two of the world's largest private organizations caring for the hungry are Christian agencies: Catholic Relief Services and World Vision. And the Salvation Army alone does more for the homeless and destitute in most areas than all secular agencies combined."⁸ Effects of these ministries include labor reform for children and adults, the abolition of slavery, and the emancipation of women.⁹ Traditional cultures have also been transformed (e.g., the eradication of head-hunting Vanuatu.¹⁰)

Nearly all mercy workers have been encouraged by the example of Mother Teresa and her order, the Missionaries of Charity. Their work has become synonymous with the word compassion. Over 4,000 Sisters are working in more than 126 countries. Their practical love and service has helped shape the world conscience about the poor and needy today.

Mother Teresa's acts of kindness and unconditional love took her before many government and world leaders. However, her goal was not to disciple and influence institutes and nations, but to love each poor person. She stated, "Ours is not a social work. We work twenty-four hours a day to express God's love. We evangelize by showing God's love. It is only through God's love that the poor can have their needs met."¹¹ At her funeral, kings, queens, and international leaders of nations laid flowers in tribute to what she had done for the poor. Her heart cry was, "We do it for Jesus."

[level 1] Mercy Ministry in YWAM—Past, Present, and Future

The historical roots of mercy ministry in YWAM go back to the childhood of Loren Cunningham, founder of YWAM. He recounts hearing his father, T. C. Cunningham, share a story of "a tanned skin girl." She was a child, a Palestinian refugee, asking for alms, but T. C.

saw her eyes begging for something far more than money. “She was reaching out for comfort, encouragement, for love, hope for the future. The Gospel. World Missions, Dad said, used to be a couple of words. But no more. From now on missions has a face. It is the face of a child.”¹²

These words led some YWAM leaders from the early 1960s to the Caribbean, to Africa, and to Asia to serve lepers, the homeless, drug addicts, refugees, and others needing relief. Decades later, God continues to use the face of that refugee child, and those like her, to direct YWAM to the most needy and least reached.

[level 2 subsection]Ly Suan continued

I met Ly Suan in 1990, years after he had left the streets. He lived with his wife and one of his daughters along the bank of the Mekong River in Stung Treng, Cambodia. Predominantly animist with Buddhist overtones, this remote, poverty-stricken area had limited electricity, no running water, and a 40 percent child mortality rate. We were assessing the local health needs. Ly Suan, proprietor of a bicycle repair cart, was repairing a tire.

As we conversed with Ly Suan, we were touched by his hospitality and graciousness. He invited us to his monsoon-flooded house. His family of five daughters and wife were very interested in the strangers’ words. We heard more of Ly Suan’s story over lunch. He told us about the only prayer he remembered. “God, have mercy upon me and my poor family.” All of the sudden, I understood and with tears I responded. “Ly Suan, God is answering your prayer. You have been praying that prayer for years. God spoke to us in Thailand that we had work to do and people to serve here in Cambodia. Of all of the thousands of Khmer to meet, we met you.” Our journeys had intersected. It was one of most memorable lunches that I have ever had.

I asked Ly Suan if he would like to read more about this God who hears the prayer of young boys. He said yes. We would bring him a Bible on our next trip. He asked us to meet him and his family at the river in the afternoon for a swim and to bathe. I had noticed that some of his daughters had skin infections so I took opportunity to see if these infections could be properly attended to with soap and water. In five days, these infections cleared up and a Khmer family and some foreigners had begun to bond in relationship.

God was answering the cry of a small Cambodian boy.

[[SB]]

As William Booth said:

[[ex]]“The exceeding bitter cry of the disinherited has become to be as familiar in our ears as the dull roar of the streets or as the moaning wind through the trees. It rises unceasing year in and year out, and we are too busy or too idle, too indifferent or too selfish to spare it a thought. Only now and then, on rare occasions, when some clear voice is heard giving more articulate utterance to the miseries of the miserable, do we pause from our daily duties and shudder for one brief moment at what life means to the poor.”¹³[[/ex]]

In contrast, Scripture often speaks about God hearing the cry of the child, the vulnerable, the afflicted, and the fatherless. His heart is moved with compassion. He acts, usually through his people. William Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army was one such person. This compassionate man responded, particularly to the homeless. In the 1890s, he implemented a vision in England that changed the lives of three million homeless children and adults living in wretched conditions. Today the “Sallies,” as they are affectionately called, impact the “down and out” in just about every major city in the world as they continue to implement Booth’s bold strategy.

Booth's strategy had seven main points which can be summarized as: (1) Every project must modify the character and conduct of those served. (2) Circumstances need radical alteration when they are the source of wretched conditions. (3) Worthwhile remedies will be commensurate with the evil they propose to end. (4) Projects must be not only large enough, but also permanent. (5) The work must be immediately practical. (6) Indirect effects should not injure those being assisted. (7) Outreach to one segment of the community should not seriously interfere with the interests of another.¹⁴

We in YWAM also believe that we can and are to have a similar kind of impact upon today's families and children. It is slowly happening. Chan Kit Ying of Mother's Love, a sister organization that has operated in China since 1992 has literally touched the lives of tens of thousands of throw-away girl babies and handicapped children. Mother's Love has thus gained the respect of both the ordinary Chinese and the government.¹⁵

In 2004, YWAM Mercy Ministries were operating in more than 70 countries through 700+ projects. The problems tackled and the solutions implemented are diverse. Staff numbering approximately 7,000 were impacting more than 2 million people annually through projects such as caring for the homeless, abandoned, and children at risk; creating jobs; training people for vocational and microenterprise work; operating health care clinics; educating in literacy; and so forth. This is encouraging, yet the faces and cries of the vulnerable have increased.

With God's help, by 2020 and in partnership with the wider body of Christ, our goal in YWAM Mercy Ministries is to hear from God, respond with compassion, and impact one hundred million people annually. An audacious goal, you might say? Yes, and impossible without God and his people. Even if we fail, the attempt is worthy of all of our efforts. What will

take place if we do not reach out to the poor? Is it not time? If not us, then who? What stands in our way? Do we need a change of heart or mind?

[level 1]Mercy Ministry and Worldview

Our assumptions about the world and how it works form our worldview. Three foundational worldviews compete for our allegiance. Animism defines ultimate reality as spiritual, with the physical world being unimportant or just an illusion. Secularism defines ultimate reality as physical and assumes that the spiritual world is nonexistent or unimportant. Theism defines ultimate reality as personal, a deity who cares for and interacts with each of us. From one of these foundations, we construct a worldview lens through which we “see” ourselves, our families, and our society. Our understanding (right or wrong) and our resulting choices flow from this worldview. A worldview sets direction and guides through life, like a road map. It also shapes our identity in relationship to the world where we live.¹⁶

Steve Bradbury, the Director of TEAR Australia wrote of conversations he had with women in Cambodia, “‘I must have been bad in a past life as this life is so awful.’ This element of the Buddhist belief helps shape their understanding of what has happened to them. This is their lot in life. They have no understanding of human rights or justice and have no hope of a different future.”¹⁷ Similar comments can be heard in many countries.

Refugees, orphans, widows, prisoners, the sick, the poor, the lonely, the destitute, and the elderly often have several things in common. They are vulnerable, often afraid. They feel alone, unloved, and without value. They live without hope, are uncertain about today and even more so about tomorrow. Some have survived or continue in situations of terrible abuse, fear, or oppression. They may wonder, *Is this my karma? Am I cursed by the spirits? Is this God’s will?*

We followers of Jesus have a message of good news to the poor. Transformation begins by the renewing of our minds, by changing our thinking. It is not enough just to put faith in Christ. We must seek to have his mind and his thoughts about our world. We must try to view the world through HIS eyes. Proverbs tell us, “As a man thinks in his heart, so is he” (Prov. 8:37 KJV). The poor have an even more desperate need to understand their history, their value, their self-worth and human dignity, and the true basis of their identity. When this occurs, the gospel really does become *good news*.

Vishal Mangalwadi of the MacLaurin Institute said, “Hunger is an obscenity and not what God intended.... We live in slums when He meant for us to live in a Garden.”¹⁸ This is not how God created the world. Poverty, like death, is an alien entity introduced to God’s creation because of the Fall. Poverty has distorted how we view God, ourselves, and our world.

[level 2 subsection]Ly Suan continued

Ly Suan was a responsible man and a good worker. His bicycle repair business expanded to a stall near the market to repair both bicycles and motorcycles. He also taught his daughters about the importance of work. Three of his daughters worked in “sales.” Two were selling gasoline from glass Coca-Cola bottles and another was selling individual cigarettes.

When Ly Suan received his Bible, he read and started asking questions. During the Khmer Rouge times, he could have been killed for being able to read, owning a pair of glasses, or for asking a question. Within six months, Ly Suan decided that he and his house would serve the Lord. They were the first of eighteen believers who wanted to follow Jesus in that remote province. And thus began their worldview changes.

[[SB]]

We influence one person at a time. Take Sopeah, an abandoned mother of four in Cambodia, as an example. Unemployed and desperate when she moved to Phnom Penh, Sopeah sold her daughter for US\$150. As regret grew, she had a dream that God might help return her daughter. If so, perhaps he could also change her life. Later, she encountered workers with Hagar¹⁹ who helped to redeem her daughter, gave them emergency assistance, and provided counsel and training at their shelter. She met the God of her dream. Now Sopeah is employed, her children attend school, and she is back with her husband. Times are still tough, but her changed thinking has brought hope.²⁰

Transformation of individuals and communities is a process that requires a change of thinking, a new way of viewing our world. Restored relationship with God can provide that. God's heart is for all peoples, all cultures, all languages to know him (Rev. 7:9).

[level 1] Varied Strategies of Mercy Ministry

There are many examples in YWAM of service and impact upon the poor, too numerous and often too sensitive to even list here. In this section, a few expanded examples serve to demonstrate a variety of strategies that are employed in ministries of compassion.

[level 2] Children at Risk

The homeless and destitute today include many children at risk. For these children, mercy ministry is indeed good news in the midst of much bad news. Abandoned children make up a growing number of "children at risk." Viva Network states that there are now more than 100 million children living on the street. YWAM in Contagem, Brazil, is a good example of the many YWAMers working with children at risk. They have schools and daycares, ministries to

rescue kids from the streets and restore them to families, and a group home for children with AIDS. They train families and teens in God's principles to prevent further problems that come from drugs and extramarital sex.²¹

[level 2]YWAM Uganda Reaches Out to Orphans

A special category of children at risk is the orphan. The church family has a significant role to play in educating, training, fostering, and adopting orphans. One of the huge challenges in orphan work today is AIDS. At the end of 2003, there were 143 million children orphaned by the death of one or both parents to AIDS in ninety-three countries.²²

Africa has been particularly hard hit by AIDS. In Uganda alone, there are over 2 million AIDS orphans. YWAMers have responded by personally adopting hundreds of AIDS orphans into their homes and by establishing group homes for AIDS orphans. These ministries are a powerful witness of the love of God. YWAMers also meet regularly with government and church officials and other agencies to discuss what can be done to address this epidemic. YWAMers have also been involved in developing and teaching powerful "positive living with HIV" materials that will hopefully help enhance life for infected persons and greatly reduce transmission of HIV. The church is one of the largest institutions in Africa. Imagine the opportunity for impact in this huge HIV/AIDS crisis as the church serves infected individuals, prays, serves the orphans, and communicates the truth in love to help stem the spread of infection.

[level 2]Refugee Ministry

Refugees require all kinds of compassionate ministry. Cambodians, affected by war since the early 1970s and crushed by the genocide of two to three million of their own people under the Khmer Rouge, are a case in point. Pol Pot, leader of the Khmer Rouge (KR), had a radical worldview. He wanted to create a modern Maoist society of one million peasants. For his vision to succeed, seven million people would have to die. He was well on his way to fulfilling this goal before the invasion by the Vietnamese in 1979. Within a year of taking power, the KR confiscated all property in the country and abolished money and all other major institutions.²³

As Cambodian refugees trickled into Thailand and the atrocities became known, the international community responded. The refugee trickle swelled to a flood of over a million refugees. For years, half a million Cambodians lived in utter squalor in camps along the Thai-Cambodian border. Many said these camps were like paradise compared to what they had just left under the KR. All had the scars of losing someone. One refugee we befriended had seen the twelve other members of his family die from murder, starvation, or disease.

God spoke to YWAM to serve these Cambodian refugees and over 700 staff responded for more than fifteen years. Health services grew to include hospitals, clinics, and health care education. Preschools and vocational training in sewing, weaving, and traditional music were initiated. YWAMers provided emergency distribution, postal, and banking services, offered social services, and created jobs. Through these practical services, many Cambodians saw the gospel for the first time. And the refugees responded.

In Khao-I-Dang (KID) camp, two square miles in radius, there were 150,000 refugees. A mini revival occurred in the first few months and 30,000 Khmer became believers in Jesus. Many thousands were discipled into their new faith in Christ. Today, there are Khmer churches in Europe, North America, Australasia, and Cambodia because of what God did in the Thai

refugee camps. Because of a past crisis, many tens of thousands are impacting their current locations. The Khmer church continues to be salt and light to Cambodia. Young believers in the early 1990s provided impetus to bring about change to the Cambodian constitution and laws in regards to the “freedom of religion” clause for the nation.

Kum Heng was nine years old when he and his mother made it to the Thai border. They were separated from two brothers and a sister, never to meet again. Arriving in KID when he was fourteen years old, he met a YWAMer from New Zealand. At age sixteen, Kum made a commitment to follow Christ. When he returned to Cambodia, he started work with YWAM’s Hagar Project as a guard, then as a driver, and later as a program officer. In 2004, Kum was overseeing the building of 10,000 clean water filters in the province of Kompong Thom, a former center of Khmer Rouge activity. He had also started a cell group church of one hundred people.²⁴

[level 2]Crisis Intervention Can Influence a Nation

Probably no greater challenge exists than when a catastrophe strikes. An earthquake, cyclone, or hurricane shakes and rips homes and lives apart. Floods or mudslides wash away the security that seemed so stable just moments before. A drought may force millions to sell their meager possessions and to migrate in search of the basics of life. Civil war creates refugees who flee homes, families, and country with only what they can carry. People become internally displaced in their own land because of war, ethnic division, cultural genocide, or appetite for power.

During the midst of such crises, we can partner with churches, agencies, and governments to minister mercy. In crisis, there is death, loss, pain, and separation. Unanswered questions,

suffering, and injustices affect many. Both victims and decision-makers are faced with many challenges. Opportunities abound for resilience, flexibility, courage, and hope. Surely, believers can help in these times.

Don Stephens, founder and president of Mercy Ships, wrote how a crisis brought key players together to assist in the relief efforts after Hurricane Oscar.²⁵ While the flag ship, the *Anastasis*, was in New Zealand, news came that Hurricane Oscar had devastated Fiji and Tonga. Houses, schools, churches were destroyed. Infrastructure was gone and the islanders were coming to grips with their losses. In New Zealand, the disaster galvanized a response from everyone, from ordinary people to national decision-makers. Churches, missions, civic clubs, and individuals pulled together to fill the hold of the *Anastasis* with relief materials ranging from lumber to fire engines. Diverse supplies were freely given and loaded gratis by the stevedores to help rebuild the devastated nations. Through many diverse people working together, one nation was able to touch other nations in need.

[level 2]Hagar Project, Transformational Development in Cambodia

The Hagar Project was begun in 1993 by YWAMers Pierre and Simonetta Tami. Over the next decade, Hagar impacted the lives of more than 100,000 women and children in war-torn and poverty-stricken Cambodia. Hagar is now an independent nongovernmental organization that serves those most at risk to trafficking. When Hagar began operations, the UN ranked Cambodia 147th out of 173 countries in human development. Now Hagar is being recognized internationally as an NGO that is making a difference in Cambodia.²⁶

Hagar has become a model of transformation development through programs such as an emergency and development center, street-based screening and counseling services, foster

homes, development villages, and creation of small businesses and new jobs. Development projects in four provinces include producing water filters, building schools and providing emergency relief. Hagar works in partnership with churches, nongovernmental organizations, and government ministries.

The Queen of Cambodia opened their soya milk factory in December 2003. Hagar Soya employs formerly destitute women from the Hagar Shelter and young men who grew up in Hagar's foster care programs who have found jobs with the business. These transformed individuals have now touched royalty. This is not publicity; this is the gospel.²⁷

[level 2 subsection] Ly Suan continued

In northern Cambodia, God was speaking to Ly Suan. He queried us, "Do you think God might be saying that he wants me to help Khmer children, who like me, were abandoned or orphaned? Do you think that could be God?"

"It sounds like it might be God," we thought out loud. So Ly Suan and his family moved from Stung Treng to Phnom Penh to work with Hagar and start serving homeless mothers and children that were sold into prostitution.

[[SB]]

At Hagar each woman and child is treated with love and dignity. Some were like Sopeah, mentioned earlier, who was reunited with her family. Others were like Sopal. She grew up in abusive foster care only to be abandoned at sixteen. She was gang raped, forcibly married, and eventually forced into prostitution. When she became too obviously pregnant to continue, she was turned out on the streets until she found shelter at Hagar. After giving birth, she learned she

was HIV-positive. “Yet, Sophal commented, ‘My life is not so bad, other girls are sold many more times than I have been.’”²⁸

Sothy, abandoned by her husband, found a home at the Hagar shelter and learned to sew with Hagar Design to support herself and her toddler son. She began a new, independent life. Unfortunately, her health soon deteriorated and she learned that both she and her son were infected with HIV. Sothy died knowing that she had dignity, that she was loved, and that her son would be cared for by Hagar’s Children’s Rehabilitation Program.²⁹

[level 2] Leprosy Work in Chennai, India

YWAM workers in Chennai have a ministry among lepers, which includes small business ventures and compassionate outreach. In a touching example of this work, the team met sixty-six-year-old Ganesh, who had been suffering with leprosy and subsequent rejection since he was thirty-three. He and his wife, now also leprosy, had been living on the streets, trying to please the gods so they could be healed, and watching his ulcers eventually remove his ability to walk. The team prayed for him, bathed his ulcers and told him of Jesus’ love. He joyfully received Jesus. On another visit, the team discovered that both leg ulcers had been completely healed with the couple crediting the healing to Jesus.³⁰

[level 2] Microenterprise Development

In the last twenty-five years, Christians have been involved with the poor in a creative strategy of microenterprise development (MED), loans to the poor for small businesses. These loans average less than US\$100 but are enough for a family of six or seven to break out of poverty. The return rates have been high.³¹ More than 80 percent of these loans go to poor

women, which assures that the profits of these microenterprises go to their families and communities. When a poor family's income rises, the increase usually goes toward better nutrition, clothing, housing, and education for children.

These loans also create an environment conducive to transformation. Presently an informal network of Christian microenterprise development organizations started by David Bussau includes more than 500 groups from 50 countries, including YWAM's work in 10 countries. This network is annually impacting more than 2 million of the poor and their communities. These MED programs affirm human dignity and value, as well as bring hope. They further empower the poor with a confidence that they can bring about change. This has great opportunity to significantly impact the two billion of the world's poorest.

[level 2]Prison Work and Literacy

Jesus said that when we visit those in prison, we visit him. Philip Scott visited the local prison in the Cambodian northeastern regional capital of Stung Treng. He provided basic necessities for the prisoners, such as salt, eating utensils, mosquito nets, and so forth. He also taught basic Khmer literacy. Song, in prison for committing some petty crimes, was illiterate when he met Philip. They met regularly for nine months. Then Song was released and returned to his village ten hours away by boat on the Sekong River.

When he returned home his wife was so impressed that he could now read. He told her that he had learned how to read because of God. Song wanted to know more about this Jesus of whom he had heard and read. Later, when Philip visited this remote district, Song invited him to his house. When Philip arrived, he was surprised to see over thirty people interested in talking.

“So, tell us about your God,” Song’s wife asked. This is not a typical Khmer greeting and Philip inquired, “Why would you want to know about this God?” She said, “My husband went to jail in Stung Treng and he couldn’t read and he returns here and he can now read. He says it is because of your God. We want to know about this God.”

So Philip shared the gospel story. Now, at least thirty serious inquirers in this village have started their journey in knowing God. Twenty-five of them were baptized, all because someone cared and took time to practically show God’s love and mercy by meeting felt needs.

In fourteen years of service to the poor in remote Stung Treng Province, YWAM has worked with local, provincial, and national authorities. At one point, the provincial government asked YWAM to provide some programs for the local youth in order to “give them a philosophy of life.” YWAM assists with many programs in the province: HIV/AIDS education and prevention, English teaching, malaria prevention, mother and child health care, school health programs, emergency relief, community health training and development, and nonformal education. YWAM’s health care programs have assisted in reducing infant mortality by the training hundreds of Khmer health care and development workers.

YWAM has planted seven churches. One area that the Khmer pastors have been “discipling” new believers in is the development of “smokeless” stoves that help reduce upper respiratory ailments. This is discipling the nation through mercy ministry.

[level 2]Waste Management as Mercy Ministry

In Vietnam, one YWAM program is waste management. A solid waste management project is already affecting several hamlets with a resultant reduction of pollution and increase in health. A bio-gas project, affecting seven communes and district leaders, provides cooking fuel

and removes pig waste in an environmentally sound way. Fewer trees are being cut for fuel. Women's work hours have been reduced by half because they no longer need to walk several kilometers for wood and because cooking is more time efficient. Hence, the women have more time for family. Other projects include clean water, sanitation, and education for school children.

[level 2]Mother Child Health Clinics

A YWAM sister organization in a poor region of a Central Asian country started a mother child health (MCH) clinic. Prior to the opening of this clinic, local people had to walk several hours for medical assistance. Fifty percent of the children were dying before the age of five. Women had an average life expectancy of only forty years.

This MCH clinic had a life changing impact upon these women and children. The women received pre- and postnatal care, nutrition, vaccinations, hygiene and child spacing education, and outpatient consultations. This physical care opened spiritual doors; the women began asking questions about this God who would send Christian families from so far away to work with them. They asked for prayer. They started hearing about Jesus, many for the first time. The local population saw the gospel before they heard its message. The local mullah felt threatened and increasingly restricted the activities of these two families. In the end, the mullah put pressure upon the government to refuse the renewal of the visas for these families. Their departure was an indicator of their impact on the community.

[level 2]Agricultural Programs

In the same Central Asian area, a related agricultural program had the same kind of impact on meeting basic human need. The agricultural team started asking questions of the local

groups, helping local people to identify their needs and participate in solutions. Through teaching, coaching, and transferring skills, the agricultural team helped increase the income of the local population and developed relationships. Here, too, the local mullah began restricting the activities of these expatriates. The mullah began giving edicts, “You cannot pray before you work. You cannot pray over these seeds or over these fields... You cannot pray with these local farmers... You cannot!”

After ten years of service, the team was approached by the local mullah. He said, “We really like what you are doing. Your good deeds are very important and good for this community and district but we must ask you to leave.” They asked, “Why are we being asked to leave? What have we done wrong?” The mullah said, “It is not that you are having an influence on this community but we are concerned that you are influencing our next generation in the ways of your God and they will follow you.”³² The mullah understood that their actions were the mustard seed of discipling a community or a nation.

[level 1] Jesus Our Model—Our Ultimate Example

Jesus is our example whether in showing acts of kindness, meeting felt needs, or discipling peoples and nations. He began and continued his ministry by meeting the needs of others. Whether at a wedding where the hosts had run out of wine or in a crowd of several thousand who had no food, Jesus met people’s needs. He also helped to shape the spheres of influence in his day, such as the religious, political, and economic spheres. He left the task to his followers to complete by the help of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus called together a group of ordinary people to become his followers. He did not call the elite power brokers to be his disciples. His followers were common: fishermen, tax

collectors, religious students, and activists. His message was simple, yet two-sided, like a coin. On one side the message was to love God, and on the other side the message was to love your neighbor. This was his single message that could not be disconnected without serious consequences. He began where people lived and met them where they had needs. It's a simple, yet profound, model:

1. He responded to needs.
2. He showed his disciples how to respond and they watched.
3. They responded and he supported.
4. He left and empowered them for the task.

In leadership terms, that is directing, coaching, supporting, and delegating. As C. Schmidt writes:

We may be surprised that love is turned into a command, imposed with the authority of the law. How can this spiritual and spontaneous feeling be imposed, and why has Christ commanded it? The ancient order of things had a fundamental law, a principle that united its morality and institutions; the new order must also have its principles and law. It is not a law like that laid down by a State, but a condition that is to be freely fulfilled. It is a virtue of the soul, and in this view love becomes a duty for the Christian. We are only Christian while loving.³³

The Future—What to Expect?

What will happen as we go and serve the absolutely poor? In many marginalized countries, Christianity is growing apace. However, such growth has not always been accompanied by the expression of integral kingdom values. As we focus upon this huge frontier, we must ask ourselves some questions:

[[BL]]Have we accepted a model of poverty that is exclusively material and economic, rather than a model that includes the social, intellectual, and spiritual dimensions?

What are the roles of Christian relief and development agencies in relation to the contemporary trends?

How can churches and Christians become truly salt and light?

How can churches become better educated in the issues that have contributed to the marginalization of communities?

How can believers exercise advocacy on behalf of the marginalized?

What are the global trends that will help our response?³⁴[[/BL]]

[level 1]Ly Suan—A Complete Cycle

During the Pol Pot years, Ly Suan had to act like someone mute, crazy, or dumb in order to survive, even though he could speak five different languages. He worked in rice fields for sixteen to twenty hours a day. He did not know how he would survive but as he worked those fields, he remembered the prayer for God to have mercy on him and his family.

After surviving on the streets and then through the Pol Pot years, Ly Suan has worked with Hagar for more than ten years. His daughter, Chantou, heads up the handicapped unit of the rehabilitation program. Ly Suan is responsible for providing clean water to poor villages of the Kratie province and is a church leader. To an audience full of national government ministers and international dignitaries, he spoke at the ten-year Hagar anniversary celebrations about how his life had been changed.

God heard the cry of this boy to have mercy on his poor family. He spoke and sent others to demonstrate his love to them. Ly Suan and his family responded to the love of God. God

spoke to them that they should love and serve those like themselves. Ly Suan led his family, in obedience, to serve others. A full circle.

[level 1]When Is God at Work?

How do we know when God is at work through mercy ministries and that they are influencing people and the community? Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden assert that seeing kingdom values replace other values in persons, movements, and structures is indicative of God at work. They give further indicators to help us recognize that God is at work:

Where we see human dignity being affirmed and people discovering a sense of self-worth, self-acceptance, and a sense of having something to contribute to the world and to others, there God is at work.

Where we see that people have the freedom to act according to their conscience without threat from others who control their actions and thus their attitudes, there God is at work.

Where people are able to make their own contribution to the life of society, especially in participation in decisions that affect them in the family, in the community, in religious matters, and in political structures, there is God at work.

Where people can live in hope, a sense that it is possible and worthwhile to plan for the future, where they can experience the respect of the community, and where there is sharing that enhances, not reduces, the humanity of the community, there is God at work.

When people are committed to the struggle against evil and injustice, and where there is a sense of equity, there is God at work.

Where women, the weak, and the handicapped find roles that give them dignity and equality, and where their needs get priority and power is shared to benefit all and dehumanize none, there is God at work.

Where we find a sense of God's presence, a recognition of the power of evil without and within, and true humility about the limitations of our knowledge in the face of God's wisdom, there is God at work. [[/BL]]

We should also look for God's work and influence as people make decisions, share information, help each other in emergencies, look for and work at jobs, attend social functions, direct the course of their families, help the underprivileged and marginalized, use resources, and worship. We should see the expression of God's work in social and family structures, in the political and government sphere, and in religious institutions. The temptation is to see God at work only in values, but he also works to transform structures to promote the values of the kingdom. While it is possible to be content with the expression of the values of the kingdom in the lives of individuals or small groups, if these values do not find structural expression they cannot bring lasting change.³⁵ [[/ex]]

If we are to be obedient to Jesus' last commandment (Matt. 28:19-20) and his Great Commandment (Matt. 22:37-39, citing Deut. 6:5 and Lev. 19:18), we must go to the ends of the earth, to all peoples with that good news and teach all that he commanded. The full scope of human need³⁶ will challenge and facilitate the church in accomplishing this task. God is at work in the discipling of nations by mercy ministry. The Holy Spirit is changing people. Communities are being positively impacted. Systems and infrastructures are also being influenced for the common good. The poor are seeing the good news.

However, there are two billion that still cry out. Are we listening? What do we hear? God awaits our response.

Notes

1. Mother Theresa, *My Life for the Poor* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1985), 101, quoted in David Aikman, *Great Souls: Six Who Changed the Century*, (Nashville: Word Publishing, 1998), 191.
2. The most commonly used definition of global poverty is the absolute poverty line set by the World Bank. Poverty is set at an income of \$2 a day or less, and extreme poverty is set at \$1 a day or less. From http://library.thinkquest.org/05aug/00282/over_what.htm, (accessed April 11, 2007).
3. Timothy J. Keller, *Ministries of Mercy—The Call of the Jericho Road* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989), 40–41.
4. C. Schmidt, *The Social Results of Early Christianity*, trans. Mary Thorpe (London: Isbister Limited, 1853), 294.
5. *Ibid.* On pages 305–321 Schmidt discusses the Christian influence upon society in the first century as witnessed by nonbelievers. In summary, Christians submitted to human authority and laws; remained and worked in a society which despised them; appealed to emperors and government officials for principles of charity and equal administration of justice; condemned local barbaric acts of exposing children to death, prostitution, and slavery; voluntarily gave offerings for the poor, the sick, widows, orphans, and strangers; responded to illness and disease

with proper treatment of workers and slaves, particularly non-Christians; elevated the role of women in society.

6. Martin Palmer, *The Jesus Sutras: Rediscovering the Lost Scrolls of Taoist Christianity* (New York: Ballantine Publishing Group, 2001), 51–52.
7. Attributed to St. Francis of Assisi. An Internet search via Google in July 2004 listed 212 websites that attribute this quote to St. Francis.
8. Charles Colson and Nancy Pearcey, *How Now Shall We Live?* (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers, 1999), 137.
9. Winkie Pratney, *Fire on the Horizon: How the Revival Generation will Change the World* (Ventura, Calif.: Gospel Light Publications, 1999), 57–58.
10. Samuel Wilson, “Defining Development in Social Terms,” in *Christian Relief and Development—Developing Workers for Effective Ministry*, ed. Edgar J. Elliston (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1989), 158.
11. Don Stephens, *Trial by Trial* (Eugene, Ore.: Harvest House, 1985), 192.
12. Loren Cunningham with Janice Rogers, *Is that Really You, God?* (Seattle: YWAM Publishing), 23–24.
13. General William Booth, *In Darkest England and The Way Out* (London: McCorquodale and Company Ltd., 1890), 15.
14. *Ibid.*, 85–89.
15. David Aikman, *Jesus in Beijing—How Christianity is Transforming China and Changing the Global Balance of Power* (Washington DC: Regnery Publishing, 2003). 282–283.

16. Darrow L. Miller with Stan Guthrie, *Discipling Nations: The Power of Truth to Transform Cultures*, 2nd ed. (Seattle: YWAM Publishing, 2001), 10. This book is an excellent starting place for helping one to better understand the world from a biblical perspective.
17. Steve Bradbury, "Where There is Hope," TEAR Australia *Target*, vol. 3 (2001).
18. *World View and Development*, YWAM Mercy Ministries International video produced by Debra Buenting (Colorado Springs, Colo.: Procla-Media, 1999).
19. Hagar, a Christian NGO, serves abandoned women and children at risk to human trafficking in Cambodia. See www.hagarproject.org/ for more information.
20. "Don't Be Afraid: Hagar's Promise to Cambodian Mothers," video by Hagar Cambodia, February 2004.
21. Isabelle Zwahlen. "Youth With a Mission Brazil," in *Mission as Transformation*, Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden, eds. (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 1999), 416.
22. UNICEF, *Children on the Brink 2004: A Joint Report on Orphan Estimates and Program Strategies*, (UNAIDS/UNICEF/USAID, July 2004.)
www.unicef.org/publications/files/cob_layout6-013.pdf, (accessed April 12, 2007).
23. An excellent overview of Cambodian history in the Khmer Rouge era can be found in Elizabeth Becker, "*When the War Was Over—Cambodia and the Khmer Rouge Revolution*" (PublicAffairs™, 1998).
24. Kum Heng, conversation with author, February 13, 2004.
25. Stephens, *Trial by Trial*, 142.
26. Victoria Silverman, "Hagar, an NGO, Helps Human Trafficking Victims in Cambodia," June 17, 2004. <http://usinfo.state.gov/gi/Archive/2004/Jun/17-448703.html> (Accessed 11 April 2007).
27. Melanie Curless, Hagar Annual Report, 2003.

28. Steve Bradbury, "Development News and Insight," *Target* (TEAR Australia, 2001), Vol 1:9.

29. *Hagar Project Report, July-December 1999* (Youth With A Mission, Cambodia, 2000), 5.

30. Tim Svoboda, *YWAM Chennai Monthly Report*, October 2002.

31. Usually 97 percent return rates and above are considered acceptable in the MED sector.

32. Anonymous European missionary, conversation with author, May 2001.

33. Schmidt, *The Social Results*, 142.

34. Samuel and Sugden, *Mission as Transformation*, 393–394. A Christian Relief and Development conference in June 1996 reported the following global trends and consequences.

The global trends are:

[[ex]][[bulleted list]]global integration of economy

breakdown of political machinery

emergence of global communication and information network

growth in modern technological innovations and related knowledge

increase in cases of AIDS, development of new clones of viruses, drug resistant bacteria and parasites

environment degradation[[/ex]]

The consequences of the above trends are:

[[ex]][[bulleted list]]a widening gap between the rich and the poor

movements of people for security and economic reasons

diminishing sovereignty of the nation state

marginalization of the nation state

raised expectations which have no real hope of fulfillment

major economic decisions which affect a majority of people are made by the emerging global economic community which not accountable to governments or the people

Increase in internal conflict and disintegration of communities and nations

The high cost and unavailability of health care[[/ex]]

35. Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden, ed., *The Church in Response to Human Need*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans/Regnum, 1987), 193–194 as quoted in *Mission as Transformation*, 261–276.

36. The following list of basic human needs is adapted from Manfred Max-Neef, “Human-scale Economics: The Challenge Ahead,” in *The Living Economy: A New Economics in the Making*, ed. Paul Ekins (London: Routledge and Kegan, 1986), 216–220.

[[ex]]1. Subsistence: food, water, income, infrastructure

2. Understanding: education and training, information, communication, conflict resolution

3. Protection: defense, prevention, cure, equity and justice

4. Affection: sense of caring and being cared for, companionship, sense of unity with others

5. Identity: sense of belonging, feeling purpose in one’s life, being of service

6. Participation: having a voice in one’s own affairs, mutual support within a collective, contributing productively to family and community

7. Freedom: choice of values, speech, assembly, work, lifestyles, location

8. Creativity: release of one’s social, economic, and spiritual potential

9. Leisure: social interaction, fun and laughter, sports, art[[/ex]]