

Shalom Makers: Development in the Way of Christ
A More Human(e) Way

By
JR Woodward

MD525: Poverty and Development
Professor Dr. Bryant Myers
Adjunct Professor Nathan Penner
Fuller Theological Seminary
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Table of Contents

Introduction 3

Is it More Human(e) to Separate Humanitarian Aid from Faith?..... 3

 Philosophical Reasons for Separation..... 3

 Ethical Reasons for Separation..... 5

 Practical Reasons for Separation.....6

A More Human(e) Way..... 7

 Changing Scripts: Turning on the En(Light)enment.....7

 Living in Truth Wherever It is Found10

 Listening to the Down Under Script.....10

 Being Fully Human.....12

 Freedom as the Politics of Jesus.....12

 Pneumatic Empowerment and Transforming the Powers.....14

 Love that Serves, Faith that Works, Hope that Surprises.....16

Conclusion.....17

References Cited.....18

Introduction

Some of the bestselling books in the West today include Richard Dawkins' *The God Delusion* and Christopher Hitchens' *god is not GREAT: How Religion Poisons Everything*. Public debate about life and faith is alive and well in popular culture, but it also extends into the world of poverty and development. This debate centers on the role that faith should play in development work. It is an argument that does not only occur between Christians and non-Christians, but even among Christians themselves.

Having entered the world of development as the co-founder of the Solis Foundation, I've had numerous conversations about whether or not the organization should be explicitly and intentionally Christian. Organizations like World Vision and Habitat for Humanity have chosen to identify themselves as such, while Nuru and Village Enterprise, although started by Christians, have chosen not to. In talking with people from both of these latter groups, I discovered the primary reason they choose not to stress their identity as a Christian organization is because it would hinder their ability to provide aid in some locations. The thesis of this paper is that, while there are philosophical, ethical, and practical reasons why nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) separate humanitarian aid from faith, a more holistic and human(e) approach to poverty and development occurs when an organization intentionally integrates its Christian faith in a Christ-like way.

Is it More Human(e) to Separate Humanitarian Aid from Faith?

Philosophical Reasons for Separation

Christopher Hitchens is a secular humanist who posits that faith in God and holy texts (religion) is the poison we must banish from all discourse. More than anything else, he believes we need a renewed enlightenment, primarily based on science and reason. By looking at the

major religious texts and recounting his own “dangerous” encounters with “religion,” he argues against the soundness of religious faith. He quotes Heinrich Heine saying,

In dark ages, people are best guided by religion, as in a pitch-black night a blind man is the best guide; he knows the roads and paths better than a man who can see. When daylight comes, however, it is foolish to use blind old men as guides (Hitchens 2007:43).

While it is unlikely that Christians would buy into Hitchens’ arguments against faith, it is possible for Christians to privatize their faith in their approach to development to such a degree that their story better reflects the story of the enlightenment rather than the story of God.

Hiebert reminds us that enlightenment thinking based on Platonic dualism, and science based on materialist naturalism, resulted in the privatization of faith and a focus on other-worldly problems. This same modern worldview resulted in science and reason becoming public truth, with a focus on this-worldly problems (Hiebert 1999:89).

The story of the enlightenment seems to have shaped the church’s understanding of her mission in the last century. Newbiggin says, part of the church saw her mission primarily in terms of personal conversion at the congregation level and the other part saw her mission primarily in terms of God’s justice embodied in social programs outside the local congregation. The danger he saw in this was that:

each is robbed of its character by its separation from the other. Christian programs for justice and compassion are severed from their proper roots in the liturgical and sacramental life of the congregation, and so lose their character as signs of the presence of Christ and risk becoming mere crusades fueled by moralism that can become self-righteous. And the life of the worshipping congregation, severed from its proper expression in compassionate service to the secular community around it, risks becoming a self-centered existence serving only the needs and desires of its members. Thus both sides of the dichotomy find good reasons for caricaturing each other, and mutual distrust deepens (Newbiggin 1995:10,11).

Jayakumar Christian, in his desire to learn from the history of the church, talks about the practical ramifications of distancing development work from the church. “These ... assumptions suggest that God, church and conversion have practically nothing to do with the day-to-day

economic good of the people. Poverty is an earthly issue for which God, the church and conversion are not the solutions” (Christian 1999:100).

Yet Jesus came to bring Good News to the poor, not just the poor in Spirit. So if our gospel isn’t good news for the poor, it is not the same good news that Jesus came to proclaim. When we separate the church from her mission, its impact on the church is negative.

Christians who approach development in a way that keeps their faith private still witness to something, though the question then becomes to what or whom they are witnessing (Myers 1999:207). While we need to recognize that sharing our story requires great sensitivity, wisdom and care, Myers reminds us that “the bottom line is that we need to be concerned about who gets worshipped at the end of the development program.” Myers continues to say, “Jayakumar Christian reminds us that whatever we put at the center of the program during its lifetime will tend to be what the community worships in the end” (Myers 1999:207,8).

Ethical Reasons for Separation

Professor Saroj Jayasinghe believes that faith-based NGOs that combine proselytizing (seeking the religious conversion of an individual or a group) with humanitarian assistance have potential ethical dilemmas. He raises these concerns from actual examples. For instance, some Christian missionaries allegedly refused to aid some people because they were of a different faith (Jayasinghe 2007:623). Jayasinghe rightly believes this ethical issue must be addressed in medical literature. In an article in *The Journal of Medical Ethics*, Jayasinghe explores “several ethical issues, using four generic activities of faith-based NGOs:

1. It is discriminatory to deny aid to a needy community because it provides less opportunity for proselytising work. Allocating aid to a community with fewer health needs but potential for proselytising work is unjust, since it neither maximises welfare (utilitarianism) nor assists the most needy (egalitarianism).
2. Faith-based-NGOs may state that proselytising work combined with humanitarian assistance improves spiritual wellbeing and overall benefit. However, proselytising work creates religious doubts, which could transiently decrease wellbeing.

3. Proselytising work is unlikely to be a perceived need of the population and, if carried out without consent, breaches the principle of autonomy. Such work also exploits the vulnerability of disaster victims.
4. Governments that decline assistance of a faith-based NGO in proselytising work may be deprive the needy of aid (Jayasinghe 2006:623).

While Jayasinghe's concerns might cause some Christians to want to separate faith from development for fear of ethical violations, his concerns might cause other Christians to dismiss him altogether, because he fails to distinguish proselytizing from honest and loving evangelism. Neither approach is wise. The third alternative is to approach development and evangelism in the way of Christ.

In understanding this third alternative, it is important to distinguish between proselytizing and evangelism. Some may consider these words synonyms, but proselytizing has the connotation of trying to coerce or manipulate people into faith using an asymmetric power relationship unfairly for selfish ends. Evangelism, by contrast, is sharing the Good News in a posture of loving servanthood sensitive to the Spirit's timing and direction. It is helpful to remember that "It is not the church that has a mission of salvation to fulfill in the world; it is the mission of the Son and the Spirit through the Father that includes the church" (Moltmann 1993:64). We are not required to be salesmen for God, but rather journalists who engage in conversation to share the Good News that we already embody.

Practical Reasons to Separate

The primary reason Christian development workers choose to not identify themselves as explicitly Christian, besides the hindrance of being able to bring aid to certain places in the world, is that they can then seek support from a broader range of people and groups, especially those outside of the faith. Access to more resources means more aid can reach those in extreme poverty. While this may be pragmatically beneficial, organizations that are not explicitly Christian may be putting pragmatics above integrity, and efficiency above meaning.

Organizations that approach development without any intention of integrating their faith end up robbing themselves of resources more precious than the “almighty dollar.” Beyond that, these development organizations rob the church of the ability to fulfill her mission in the world more holistically, and more likely witness to the story of the enlightenment more than the story of God.

A More Human(e) Way

There is, I believe, a more human(e) way to approach development. This involves fully integrating our Christian faith in our approach to development and clearly witnessing to the story of God and the God of the story. Our understanding of poverty shapes our understanding of development (Myers 1999:94), and a development organization that wants to adopt a more human(e) approach must define poverty holistically in order to approach development holistically. This does not mean the organization must be comprehensive in its approach, because that is both unrealistic and unwise for a single group. In an attempt to be holistic, every development organization must ask a vital question: Which script or story is “normative to all the stories” (Myers 1999:111)?

Changing Scripts: Turning on the En(Light)enment

It is a bit simplistic to say that the biblical narrative should be our guiding story, for we need only see the present and the past to recognize that “belief” in God is no guarantee of virtuous living. As Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove writes, “It is not uncommon in our post-Christian culture to hear Christianity derided as bad news. Its Crusades were violent, its Inquisitions inhuman, its gender norms oppressive, its truth claims intolerant, its political imagination undemocratic” (Wilson-Hartgrove in Woodward 2010). Even a casual reading of the narrative of Scripture will demonstrate that the people of God have failed in large part to live lives faithful to God.

However, this unfaithfulness does not erase the good news of Christ's faithfulness. The good news of Christ's faithfulness and the gift of the Spirit give hope that the people of God can be more faithful to the God of the story. While some people like Hitchens and Dawkins are contending for a new enlightenment, many in the West have come to recognize that "even reason and science cannot always be relied upon to resolve disputes and settle truth claims. Rather, reason and science are often merely tools in the hands of deeper and more powerful forces such as economic and class conflicts, ethnic and racial hostilities, and gender divisions" (Brownson in Hunsberger 1996:229). Many in the West have already turned from the enlightenment story to a postmodern one.

Another pitfall of the story of the enlightenment is that man becomes the measure of all things. When this happens, the non-poor are more likely to play god in the lives of the poor. As Malcolm Muggeridge said, "If God is dead, somebody is going to have to take his place." (Muggeridge 1983:33) And that somebody often becomes the development worker (Myers 1999:89). It seems quite difficult to address the issues of poverty that Christian identifies – "captivity to the god-complexes of the non-poor, deception by the principalities and powers, inadequacy in worldview, and suffering from a married identity" (Christian 1999:73) - without God in the picture.

The fact is that everybody is a part of some narrative. Everyone lives in some story. I like the way Walter Brueggemann puts it:

Everybody has a script. People live their lives by a script that is sometimes explicit but often implicit. That script may be one of the great meta-narratives created by Karl Marx or Adam Smith or it may be an unrecognized tribal mantra like, "My dad always said ...". The practice of the script evokes a self, yields a sense of purpose and provides security. When one engages in psychotherapy, the therapy often has to do with reexamining the script--or completely scuttling the script in favor of a new one, a process that we call conversion (Brueggemann 2005).

While the focus and length of this paper does not permit a full apologetic of why the meta-narrative for any development agency should be the narrative of God, I contend that the

reason we must fully integrate the Christian faith with development is because the scripture story, properly understood and fully entered into, provides the best hope for transformation for Christian and non-Christian alike. The story of God calls us to listen to and walk with the poor and live in truth wherever it is found. It invites the poor and the non-poor to be empowered by the Holy Spirit to experience transformation and embody a different social ethic by practicing the politics of Jesus. The story of God must be fully integrated into our approach to development if we hope to see “the powers that be” transformed, or the recovery of our true identity and vocation as human beings. Myers, when talking about poverty, says:

Poverty is a result of relationships that do not work, that are not just, that are not for life, that are not harmonious or enjoyable. Poverty is the absence of shalom in all its meanings. All four poverty frameworks provide explanations that rest on the idea of relationships that are fragmented, dysfunctional, or oppressive. Chamber’s poverty trap, Friedman’s access to social power, Christian’s framework for disempowerment, and Jayakaran’s lack of opportunities to grow, all have at their foundation relationships that lack shalom, that work against well-being, against life and life abundant (Myers 1999:86,87).

The story of God is about how to join God in the renewal of all things – our relationship with the Creator of all things, with other people, within ourselves, and with all of creation. The story calls us to a love that serves, a faith that works, and a hope that surprises. This script is different from the dominant one of our day, which Brueggemann describes as “the script of therapeutic, technological, consumerist militarism that permeates every dimension of our common life” (Brueggemann 2005:1). This is a failed script, and Brueggemann calls people to relinquish this powerful script through the “steady, patient, intentional articulation of an alternative script... rooted in the Bible” (Brueggemann 2005:2). This will allow us to approach development in a more holistic and human(e) way.

Living in Truth Wherever It is Found

It is important to remember that the story of God shared through the scriptures (special revelation) teaches us to pay attention to God’s truth wherever we find it (general revelation).

We are told by the Psalmist (Ps. 19), as well as Paul (Rom. 1), that by studying creation and listening to our own conscience, we can understand that we have a Creator. Other stories reinforce the axiom that “all truth is God’s truth.” These include the story of Abraham and Milchizedek, Moses and Jethro, the Magi, and some Gentiles in the gospels whom Jesus considered to have more faith and wisdom than his own people. Each story reveals how wisdom often comes from those who aren’t considered to be part of the people of God.

Living in truth wherever we find it keeps us humble, which is one of many important attitudes for a holistic development worker (Myers 1999:167). When we consider the multi-faceted nature of poverty and the complexities of development, we need all the help we can get - from Christians and non-Christians, anthropologists, sociologists, social psychologists and theologians. Not only can we learn from various people, but we can also learn from circumstances in general. As Malcolm Muggeridge has said, “Every happening, great and small, is a parable whereby God speaks to us, and the art of life is to get the message” (Muggeridge 2003: 25). When we realize that all truth is God’s truth wherever we find it, we not only learn much from those who study development professionally (Myers 1999:86,91), but we seek to learn from the poor themselves, regardless of race, gender or creed.

Listening to the Down Under Script

One of the champions of listening to the poor is Robert Chambers. In his book, *Whose Reality Counts: Putting the First Last*, he mentions his earlier book was subtitled “Putting the Last First” and how that was easier than putting the first last. “For it means that those who are powerful have to step down, sit, listen, and learn from and empower those who are weak and last” (Chambers 1997:2). Chambers notes that development workers in the “first world” prefer to simplify the definition of poverty through things like a poverty line – low income or low consumption - because they can be easily measured. Yet the poor’s own perception and

definition of poverty includes “not only lack of income and wealth, but also social inferiority, physical weakness, disability and sickness, vulnerability, physical and social isolation, powerlessness and humiliation” (Chambers 1997:45). He posits that when poverty is simplified and defined by the well-off, poverty comes “to be narrowed to what has been measured and is available in statistics” (Chambers 1997:46). And Myers says, “When we fail to listen, to see what we can learn, we are in fact telling them that they are without useful information, without contribution. By dismissing what they know, we further mar the identity of the poor. Our good intentions deepen the poverty we seek to alleviate” (Myers 1999:145).

The poor tell us they feel unheard. “Nobody hears the poor. It is the rich who are being heard.” They tell us they feel undervalued and worthless. “When they assist you they treat you like a beggar” (Narayan 2000:2). If we take time to listen, we will realize the poor are deeply spiritual and place an extremely high value their spirituality (Narayan 2000:21,24,38). To leave them with the story of the enlightenment - that does away with God, favoring technology, reason, and science instead - further diminishes the voice of the poor and, knowingly or unknowingly, proselytizes them with a different story.

Chambers, not a self-identifying Christian, often follows the way of Christ better than self-identified Christians, which demonstrates the need for those who claim to be shaped by the story of God to more fully enter into and embody that story. As Christian articulates in *The God of the Empty-Handed*, it took a journey over time – from Wheaton '66 to Oxford '90 – for evangelicals to recognize their “failure to be disciples in its mission among the poor and the oppressed” (Christian 1999:73). Gustavo Gutierrez and other liberation theologians who live among, listen to, and side with the poor, have positively helped shape the theology of evangelicals who live among the well-off, to the point where evangelical theologians and missiologists now understand that poverty -

involves a “marring of the image of God among the poor, is perpetuated by flawed structures, is the result of many distortions of truth, is a result of lack of love and compassion, involves both micro and macro dimensions, is a result of fallenness of the culture, is perpetuated by principalities and powers, involves political ramifications of economic issues, includes issues of power distribution, and is the result of the Fall of humanity” (Christian 1999:73).

As Myers in *Walking with the Poor* helps us remember, the very nature of poverty is about flawed relationships – with ourselves, God, others, and creation. These flawed relationships mar the identity of the poor and non-poor. The heart of development is about healing the marred identity of the poor and non-poor *and* helping them discover and live out their calling. In short, development work is about becoming fully human.

Being Fully Human

When we take the time to listen to, walk with, and recognize the poor as people in the image of God, we realize that, at the heart of poverty is a “web of lies that results in the poor internalizing a view of themselves as being without value, and without a contribution to make, believing that they are truly god-forsaken” (Myers 1999:115). Myers asserts that “no transformation can be sustainable unless this distorted disempowering sense of identity is replaced by the truth” that the poor are “valuable enough to God to warrant the death of the Son in order to restore that relationship (dignity) and to give gifts that contribute to the well-being of themselves and their community (vocation)” (Myers 1999:155).

This twin idea of being made in the image of God and the worth that all human beings have because of the universal love of God for humanity is persuasively argued by Nicholas Wolterstorff in his book, *Justice: rights and wrongs*, as the only solid grounding for inherent human rights. He contends that the concept of rights was not a product of the enlightenment, but is found in the story of Scripture. He makes that point that not only does existing secular theory lack solid ground for human rights, but even some theistic attempts to ground human rights solely in the fact we are made in God’s image falls short. He argues there must be a

“bestowed worth that is universal and equal for all humanity in order to establish inherent rights; and that bestowed worth is found in the love of God” (Allison 2008:1). The story of God is about helping those made in his image become all they were created to become.

Freedom as the Politics of Jesus

Nobel prize winner Amartya Sen helps us understand what it means to become all you were created to become, because he doesn't view poverty in strictly deficit thinking. He sees development as freedom.

Development requires the removal of major sources of unfreedom: poverty as well as tyranny, poor economic opportunities as well as systematic social deprivation, neglect of public facilities as well as intolerance or overactivity of repressive states. Despite unprecedented increases in overall opulence, the contemporary world denies elementary freedom to vast numbers – perhaps even the majority of people (Sen 1999: 3,4).

While Sen defines poverty and development more holistically, according to David Fitch in *The Great Giveaway*, a significant reason why true justice and freedom are not experienced today is because the church has not practiced redeeming economics and learned how to live as God's people *in* but not *of* capitalism.

Gerhard Lohfink in *Jesus and Community* reminds us that Jesus sought to gather the people of God together so that as a divine counter-society we might be a light to all people. He traces this idea from Jesus through the early church and makes a convincing case that the good news is not simply pietistic sayings designed for personal contemplation. Rather, Jesus' intention was to create a new society that, through their life and practices, demonstrates the arrival of the new world of God in Christ where the Spirit of God “dismantles national and social barriers, group interests, castes systems and domination of one sex of the other (Lohfink 1984:93). We are called as the people of God to be the new social order living out the politics of Jesus. Shane Claiborne helps us see what it means to be born again into a new economic system when he says:

It's important to understand that redistribution comes from community, not before community. Redistribution is not a prescription for community. Redistribution is a description of what happens when people fall in love with each other across class lines. When the Scripture tells the story of the early church in the book of Acts, it does not say that they were of one heart and mind because they sold everything. Rather, they held all in common precisely because they were of one heart and mind, as rich and poor found themselves born again into a family in which some had extra and others were desperately in need. Redistribution was not systematically regimented but flowed naturally out of a love for God and neighbor. I am not a communist, nor am I a capitalist. As Will O'Brien said, 'When we truly discover love, capitalism will not be possible and Marxism will not be necessary.' (Claiborne 2006:163)

Pneumatic Empowerment and Transforming the Powers

Alternative development work, in Friedmann's view, "involves a process of social and political empowerment whose long-term objective is to re-balance the structure of power in society by making state action more accountable, strengthening the powers of civil society in the management of its own affairs, and making corporate business more socially responsible" (Friedmann 1992: 31). Friedmann is a fan of the poor being actors in their own development and helps us understand that if true development is going to take place among the poor, they must not only have greater social access, but they must be empowered to act politically.

Yet, as Myers points out, Friedmann's approach has some blind spots, one being that "he does not mention the effect of worldview in perpetuating poverty and sustaining the privileged status of the non-poor" (Myers 1999:103). Paul Farmer in *Pathologies of Power: Health, Human Rights and the New War on the Poor* says:

A central irony of human rights law is that it consists largely of appeals to the perpetrators. After all, most crimes against humanity are committed by powerful states, not by rogue factions or gangs or cults or terrorist. That makes it difficult for institutions accountable to states to take their constituents to task (Farmer: 2003:242).

One way the story of God has an advantage over enlightenment - that Christian so aptly points out - is that a grassroots kingdom response to the powerlessness of the poor, "reverses the process of disempowerment, confronts the god-complexes, heals person in poverty relationships, addresses inadequacies in worldview, challenges principalities and powers,

establishes truth and righteousness, and proclaims that all power belongs to God” (Christian 1999: 212,213). The beauty in the story of God is that the God of all power is the one who empowers the poor and non-poor alike. If the poor needed the non-poor to “empower them,” there would always be an asymmetry of power. But in God’s story, while some may be empowered by the Spirit before others, it is the same Spirit that empowers everyone. Being empowered does completely resolve the issue, however, for As Christian says, “Beyond mere strategies for empowerment, the very nature of power needs redefinition” (Christian 1999:166).

In C.S. Lewis’s *The Screw Tape Letters*, Screwtape, the chief demon, makes a toast to the demons he is training. He goes on at length about how they must use systems and structures and certain ideas and people to influence the masses so that the demons don’t have to use their energy personally, but simply use the “evil systems” to keep people from living out the calling of God in their lives. Screwtape makes it clear that the lowest demons are to be individual tempters. The greater demons are those that influence whole systems and the world values that cause people to fall, as well as to fail to live out their calling and thus become part of the evil system by not standing against it (Lewis 2001:179-181).

The historical problem of power is that those who gain power tend to get corrupted by the power they gain. How is it possible for the poor, or non-poor for that matter, to name, unmask, and engage the powers, instead of letting the powers shape us?

Love that Serves, Faith that Works, Hope that Surprises

John 13:3 tells us that “Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under His power and that he had come from God and was returning to God.” In other words, Jesus knew who He was. He didn’t feel the need to prove himself. We are told that he had all power and that he was going to show the full extent of his love. What was he about to do? While the disciples

were arguing over who was the greatest, Jesus bent down to wash their feet. Jesus taught us that when you have all power and don't want to corrupt yourself with it, you serve others.

Besides having a love that serves, when we live in God's story, we are called to a faith that works. We are to pray that God's kingdom would be more fully realized here on earth and if we are praying in faith, we must have actions that follow. The Good News is not just for another time and place, but also for here and now; the kingdom of God is at hand. We must engage in a love that serves, a faith that works, and finally a hope that surprises.

One of the biggest reasons to intentionally integrate faith into development is because the story of God brings genuine hope. We are promised by the Creator that he will make all things new. Shalom was how the prophets talked about the day when all things would be made right again. Those things that have become corrupt and polluted will be remade to take our breath away. Through imagery and story, their words painted a picture of how things are supposed to be. We will no longer view the poor as tools and property, but as people in the very image of God. People will not try to build our kingdoms to rule in our own way, but would gladly be a part of the kingdom of God, so that peace would prevail. They picture a world in which the original environment will become free from the curse. They speak of a place in which people will genuinely love each other. This is the future that God imagines for us and that He is bringing about. John Howard Yoder reminds us that:

It is abundantly clear in the New Testament, as all exegetes agree, that this final triumph over evil is not brought about by any human or political means. The agent in judgment is not the church, for the church suffers nonresistently. Nor is the agent the state, as it is for the judgments of God within history; for in fact the state, refusing ever more demonically Christ's dominion, becomes God's major enemy (Antichrist). God's agent is His own miraculous Word, the sword coming from the mouth of the King of kings and the Lord of lords who is astride the white horse (Rev. 19). Just as has been the case ever since the patriarchs, and most notably at Christ's cross, the task of obedience is to obey and the responsibility for bringing about victory is God's alone. His means beyond calculation. God's intervention, not human progress, is the vindication of human obedience. The Christian's responsibility for defeating evil, is to resist temptation to

meet it on its own terms. To crush the evil adversary is to be vanquished by him because it means accepting his standards (Yoder 1971:62,63).

Conclusion

While for philosophical, ethical, and practical reasons some choose not to intentionally integrate Christian faith into their approach to development, I argue that it is more holistic and human(e) to do so. The heart of my argument is that everybody lives by a story. If we have become Christ followers, the story we are called to live is the story of God, not the story of the enlightenment. Whatever story we choose, we should do so fully. When we live in God's story, we live in truth wherever it is found and we honor the poor by listening and involving them as self-identified spiritual people. Living in God's story enables us to be fully human and live in the freedom of Jesus' politics and the same Holy Spirit that fell on the people at Pentecost falls on the poor and non-poor alike, empowering them to be subversive agents and join God in the renewal of all things, including the powers that be. By joining God's story, we engage in love that serves, a faith that works, and a hope that surprises. And when we faithfully embody the story of God, it is impossible to keep quiet about the hope we have. As Leslie Newbigin has said,

If evangelism is the attempt of a religious group to enlarge itself by cajoling or manipulating those unable to resist, then it is rightly suspect. But a believing, celebrating, loving Christian fellowship, fully involved in the life of the wider community and sharing its burdens and sorrows, cannot withhold from others the secret of its hope and certainly cannot commit the monstrous absurdity of supposing that the hope by which it lives applies only to those of a particular ethnic origin (Newbigin in Weston 2006: 147).

God is bringing the world toward the future he has imagined, and development workers have an opportunity to join him in that story. We are given the choice of which story we want to inhabit, and that story in turn shapes us, for the good or the bad. However, we will be most effective in our development work if we make every effort to root ourselves in God's narrative.

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