

# Helping Without Hurting

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 19 October 2014

Preacher: Roger Pieters

[ 0 : 0 0 ] all right um maybe we should open in prayer and so lord i pray you would um bless us as we talk about how to love our neighbor and um lead us in the paths of righteousness by the inspiration of your holy spirit amen so uh the prayer book is some of us have already heard has jesus replying to the pharisee with his testing question of what commandment's greatest giving the shema to love the lord with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and jesus adds this is the first and greatest commandment and the second is like it says matthew or the prayer book is like unto it love your neighbor as yourself and um this is a great calling and a difficult one and um it's sort of what i'd like to talk about today how to love our neighbor um i'm a member of the malawi committee and um i think chris is here he's also a member and susan and um we continue to find ourselves wrestling with how to help um and in two different ways one how to uh real build our relationship with the diocese of the upper shiri and um and there's a growing desire as well to support the people in the diocese and how would we do that so um we've been reading an interesting book when helping hurts um by steve corbett and brian fickert i don't know have any hands for anyone that's seen the book or heard of it um and uh has anyone uh read it or own it um i have a couple of extra copies um if afterwards you want a copy to read um then uh let me know and i can loan you one um so this is put out by the chalmers center um in the states and uh it's a organization or part of a school to uh uh look at uh international development as well as um poverty alleviation locally within the country and um and they've recently come out with a version of their book um um helping without hurting um for short-term missions um that came out october 1st um but i haven't received a copy of it yet um so i don't have that to show you okay so um just to summarize then we're going to look at what is poverty and um they define poverty in a specific way which i think is helpful um then we're going to look at relief versus development and then look at what development looks like and um and uh uh what what i'm proposing to do is in sort of two parts um what i'm going to do today is primarily discuss the ideas in this book and relate it begin to relate it to what's happening in malawi and then i'd like to come again if this goes well and talk more about microfinance and what we can do or or how how to do things um for for the people within the diocese and continue the conversation um so i guess to start with um what is poverty so uh anyone have any ideas what do we think of when we think of poverty i guess is the thing no money no money okay anything else shortage of food okay no hope of change oh okay no hope of change no basic shelter okay no good water okay great so lack of money or low economic okay so um uh so feel free to jump in with comments along the way um or questions because uh part of

learners exchanges discussion so that'd be great um so uh one of the things that um uh corbett and fickert um focus on is that we in the west usually think of um uh poverty in uh terms of material goods so money food shelter water um these are the things that we focus on um and uh they're saying that by focusing on a material definition of poverty um gets us into trouble and that's what i'd like to explain so they define poverty differently um or propose defining it um as a as um not a lack of material goods but um poverty is brokenness and what they call four foundational relationships our relationship with um god our relationship with self our relationship with each other and with the created world um so to start with susan can you read the passage from colossians chapter one the sun is the image of the invisible god the firstborn over all creation for in him all things were created things in heaven and on earth visible and invisible where the thrones or powers or rulers or authorities all things have been created through him and for him he is before all things and in him all things hold together bless you and he is the head of the body the church he is the beginning and the firstborn of among the dead and so that in everything he might have the supremacy for god was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him and through him to reconcile to himself all things whether things on earth or things in heaven by making peace through his blood shed on the cross

thanks so this is a great passage colossians 1:15 talking about how jesus is the creator the sustainer and the reconciler of all things um so based on this passage corbett and fickert suggest that um to see reconciliation in terms of these four relationships first with our relationship with god and this is the primary relationship and others flow from this um uh myself i really like the section of the gloria that goes oh lord god heavenly king god the father almighty at one time i thought wow why so many words here and then i thought well oh lord god that makes us a servant of god by making him lord heavenly king makes us a member of his a citizen of his kingdom and finally god the father almighty we are the adopted children so this this builds from from a servant or a slave all the way to being a child and is a most marvelous thing so the second reconciliation is with the self and um god has created us in the image of god having inherent worth and dignity and um and have a high calling as bearers of the image of god um not to be gods ourselves but to follow him and to reflect him and in some sense to emulate god so this is the important part as we'll see in a moment relationship to others um we are created to live in relationship to others as we all know so to encourage um uh to love each other to use our gifts as god has given them um and uh in this passage in colossians

jesus is the creator and sustainer and reconciler um of uh social relationships of political relationships and economic relationships of society and i i think this is quite marvelous because it makes um you know uh even though society is imperfect jesus is engaged with society and culture and is interested in it and wishes to reconcile and redeem it and um uh this i think is quite helpful and then the relationship to the rest of creation we're called to be stewards of god's creation to care for creation and interact with it and to um support ourselves from the fruits of our stewardship um so um i find this helpful um because it defines poverty relationally um it acknowledges the multifaceted character of human beings and it brings a bunch of disparate things together for example if we see poverty as a lack of material goods then our solution to poverty is to give material goods to someone which may be necessary in certain situations um if we see poverty as personal sins of the poor then our calling is to evangelize and disciple the poor which is certainly necessary if it's lack of knowledge we'll focus on education on providing education and if it's oppression by others we'll work for social justice and each of these are streams within the church and this kind of brings these streams together and integrates them um that and the other idea they bring out is that poor communities are part of the good world that god has created and is sustaining god is sustaining the entire world i'll read you a paragraph here that explains this um uh they start we are not bringing christ to poor communities he has been active in these communities since the creation of the world sustaining them by his powerful word hebrews 1 through 3 hence a significant part of working in poor communities involves discovering and appreciating what god has been doing there for a long time this should give us a sense of humility and awe as we enter poor communities for part of what we see there reflects the very hand of god of course the residents of these communities may not recognize that god has been at work in fact they might not even know who god is so part of our task may include introducing the community to who god is and helping them to appreciate all that he has been doing for them since the creation of the world and um so this is this is the result of this uh so then you can ask the question well who are the poor and um uh they write due to the comprehensive nature of the fall every human being is poor in the sense of not experiencing these four foundational relationships in the way god intended so the downside of this definition of seeing everyone as poor is that um now we have to sort of make a distinction between the materially poor and the materially non-poor which is starting to become a bit of a tongue twister um on the other hand um it it acknowledges that we're all in need of god's reconciliation and i think that's the upside and and um i think that's uh a good emphasis so how can helping hurt and this is kind of one of the core ideas in the book

um corbett and fickert give an example based on true events and i won't read you the whole story i'll just sort of briefly summarize it um a middle class church chooses to minister to a nearby housing price housing project sorry with high rates of unemployment by singing carols and handing out christmas presents for the kids they are rewarded by the happy faces of the children but after a few years it becomes hard to find church volunteers to take the toys and after some digging the following becomes clear a church member confessed um their situation never improves the people in the housing project things stay the same year in and year out and quote they are unwed mother mothers on welfare and quote they don't deserve our help which you know is a confession and then the other part they discovered is that fathers in the housing complex were leaving out the back door when they heard the carolers come so i guess the question is um the book presents some ideas of

what's happening here but i thought i'd ask what what might be going on here does anyone have any ideas why are the fathers leaving through the back door what's that supposed to mean um okay um okay that's a good question we'll get to that anyone else have any suggestions or ideas or okay so so um after they looked into this they found that the parents were embarrassed their kids were receiving toys that were nicer than the toys that they could buy themselves and they would rather have earned the money to have bought the toys for their kids than to receive them um and and it goes deeper than that corbett and fickert suggest that that um uh delivering the toys increased the parents sense of shame and inadequacy and this makes this inadvertently makes it more difficult for the parents to apply for jobs and job hunting is a very difficult thing i mean you're trying to get through as much rejection as possible um and requires confidence and so in some sense delivering the toys exacerbates the very problem of poverty of of uh joblessness that um the community that the church was attempting to address in the first place so i i don't think we can underestimate the role of shame and inferiority um the world bank uh after not having some success in poverty alleviation did a study where they interviewed sixty thousand poor people to consult and ask what what do you feel as poor people and i'll read you a few quotes of what people responded um for a poor person everything is terrible illness humiliation shame we are cripples we are afraid of everything we depend on everyone no one needs us we are like garbage that everyone wants to get rid of that's a quote from moldovia from uh uganda when one is poor she has no say in public she feels inferior she has no food so there is famine in her house no clothing and no progress in her family and then um uh from guinea bisau when i don't have any food to bring to my family i borrow mainly from neighbors and friends i feel ashamed standing before my children when i have nothing to help feed my family i'm not well when i'm unemployed it's terrible so corbett and fickert go on to write while people mention having a lack of material things they tend to describe their condition in far more psychological and social terms

than north american audiences poor people typically talk in terms of shame inferiority powerlessness humiliation fear hopelessness depression social isolation and voicelessness north american audiences tend to emphasize a lack of material things such as food money clean water medicine and housing as will be discussed further and as we'll talk about this mismatch between many outsiders perceptions of poverty and the perceptions of poor people themselves can have important consequences for poverty alleviation efforts so uh...

[17:00] this this was a surprise to me um... you know i had thought of poverty in terms of material goods um... and i hadn't realized that there was such a huge um... psychological side to poverty and um... i don't know if you're familiar with brena brown a professor of social work at the university of houston she's recently done a lot of work on shame and showing how um... powerful that is in people's lives and that sort of confirms that this side is is really an important part that we need to be sensitive to um...

so that was for the materially poor so what happened for the materially non-poor um... corbett and fickard reported that church members initially expressed some veiled disdain for the residents of the housing project um... you know politely um...

but there there was a subtle sense of pride as they carried out the project and as the years passed and things stayed the same the disdain increased so in the end the gulf between the church and the housing project had increased due to this program of delivering toys um... so uh...

and this is this is the side that i guess is a challenge for us um... and uh... so corbett and fickard write at the same time the economically rich including most of the readers of this book also suffer from a poverty of being in particular the economically rich often have god complexes as he calls it it's a little uncomfortable to use that kind of it's a little strong but but we'll go with it because i can't think of a better word a subtle and unconscious sense of superiority in which they believe that they have achieved their wealth through their own efforts and that they have been chosen to decide or that they should decide what is best for low income people who may view as inferior to themselves this is this is and it isn't i don't think it's overt but a subtle and unconscious sense of this and i think i think i can see that in myself and fickert challenges us by saying what you know few of us are conscious of having a god complex which is part of the problem we are deceived for example consider this why do you want to help the poor what truly motivates you do you really love poor people and want to serve them or do you have other motives and here brian in particular confesses i confess to you that part of what motivates me to help the poor is my felt need to accomplish something worthwhile with my life to be a person of significance to feel like i have pursued a noble

cause it makes me feel good to use my training and economics to save poor people and in the process i sometimes unintentionally reduce the poor to objects that i use to fulfill my own need to accomplish something it is a very ugly truth and it pains me to admit it but quote when i want to do good evil is right there with me romans 7 21 so this this is our challenge is to to know ourselves and to understand our motivation um so i guess the conclusion then um of this is that um we ran out of pages here is that uh there's the material definition of poverty plus um uh for better of a lack word they use a small g thankfully god um complex yes thank you i'm already freezing up on this one of the of the non materially poor plus the the um feelings of inferiority and shame and and all these other and i'm spelling it correctly of the materially poor so that all of these add up to harm both for the people that are we're trying to help and ourselves um and uh this is this is um this is the first big idea in the book um and uh as we talked about harm uh occurs to the residents of the housing project to their dignity and their capacity to look for work and harm happens to the church members increasing a subtle and difficult to deal with sense of pride and superiority so um corbett and fickert challenge us that the alternative is to see all in need of reconciliation and to first seek god all right so um let's see the second major idea in the book is the distinction between relief and development um uh corbett and fickert say one of the biggest mistakes that north american churches make by far is applying relief in situations where development is appropriate so what what would relief be and what would development be any ideas uh relief would be like almost taking away someone's initiative um because they might have uh ability to uh develop things on their own maybe just leave a little bit of assistance um people from um people that know how to grow everything out of their backyard and stuff like that they could probably teach us a lot of things so it's not um um it wouldn't you know yeah that's a great uh that's a great uh comment yeah any others is it sort of like giving a person a fish or teaching them a fish uh yes yeah that's so relief is to give and development is is teaching uh any other suggestions an attitude of respect okay for which one both ways okay yeah so that's so respect is important for both any other comments yes short term ideally and this is long term there's with animals in Stanley park when people feed their raccoons it takes away their initiative and the parks people come later on they find these dead raccoons so it gives them a short bit of food it takes away their initiative and they can't cope in the winter and those same raccoons they die in the winter that's what happens in [ 24 : 49 ] Stanley Park when people are being nice to go down there to feed the animals as they don't feed the animals yeah okay yeah that's great right okay enabling and lowering hurdles yeah okay so you guys have hit on many of the suggestions relief then is urgent and temporary provision of emergency aid to reduce immediate suffering for people who are unable to help themselves it's a provider receiver relationship and actually the good Samaritan is an example of that where the Israelite lying on the side of the road could not help himself and was helped by the Samaritan so Corbett and Fickert suggest that effective relief is seldom and immediate and temporary so this is and the best relief is done developmentally so we'll next talk about development so development they suggest is the process of ongoing change that moves all people both the helpers and the help closer to being in a right relationship with

God with self with others and the rest of creation so the last two thirds of the book deal with development it's difficult to summarize quickly so i'm going to sort of touch on three major points and then discuss a little bit how this relates to our work in Malawi or not and then we can talk about that the first thing they suggest is to avoid paternalism and i'll read you from page 109 here some examples i'm not sure i'm happy with the word paternalism either but they suggest do not do things for people that they can do for themselves so do not do things for people they can do for themselves and the style of writing in the book is somewhat folksy so you have to kind of get over that here he says memorize this recited under your breath all day long and wear it like a garland around your neck every time you are engaged in poverty alleviation ministry keep this at the forefront of your mind for it can keep you from doing all sorts of harm so there's resource paternalism which is providing goods for people which we've already discussed there's also situations where giving things can distort the local economy an example from another book is treadle pumps

Paul Pollack and others had built a business of selling treadle pumps in Bangladesh and the Bangladeshi government offered free treadle pumps and their business was ruined for about six months until everyone realized the free pumps weren't coming and went back to buying pumps again from the businesses there's spiritual paternalism many of us assume they write that we have

a lot to teach the materially poor about God and that we should be the ones preaching from the pulpit teaching the Sunday school class and leading the vacation bible school but often times the materially poor have an even deeper walk with God and have insights and experiences that they can share with us if we would just stop talking and listen and there's knowledge paternalism which is tricky to handle they say because we often do have things to offer but the materially poor also have unique insights into their own cultural contexts and are facing circumstances that we do not understand very well they write the fact that a person successfully operates a software company in Boston does not ensure that this person has the best business advice for a highly vulnerable cassava farmer living on one dollar a day in a semi feudal institutional setting of rural Guatemala humility caution and an open ear are in order so this is the and then labor paternalism which we've already discussed is not doing things for people when they can do it themselves and Brian again has a story from his own life I remember going on spring break mission trip to Mississippi when I was in college I will I will never forget the feeling I had as I stood on a ladder painting a house while the young able-bodied men living in the house sat on the front porch and watched I did so much harm that day yes the house got painted but in the process I undermined these people's calling to be stewards of their own time and talent and then finally managerial paternalism which he says is the hardest to deal with we love to see things done quickly and efficiently we tend to take charge we want to get things accomplished so he has a variety of suggestions on how to deal with that but he's saying that is actually one of the most difficult sides of doing projects and moving from projects to processes so the second focus that I'll just briefly mention is focusing on assets rather than needs this is an idea that comes out of the international development community with asset based community development and focusing on needs which is asking what's wrong initiates a negative dynamic because it makes us feel superior and it disempowers the people who are being asked that question and makes them dependent on delivery of outside and unsustainable goods but focusing on assets asks what is right what gifts has God given you how can your community work together how have you survived in the past so it is looking at the gifts and resources and empowering the local community in which outsiders come to listen rather than to provide the solution so

Corbett and Ficker write of course the fall has distorted the inherent goodness of the creation design damaged the assets as a result communities do have pressing and urgent needs individual lives are broken organizations associations businesses churches and governments often pursue power more than the public interest and customs and cultures can often be broken but all is not lost Colossians 1 16-17 teaches that Christ is holding all things together he does allow the effects of sin he does not allow the effects of sin to completely destroy the inherent goodness of the assets he has created in the midst of decay the assets persist albeit in distorted fashion because the creator of the universe makes them persist we need not despair there is plenty of goodness to discover and celebrate even in a fallen world so this is the focus on assets and then finally participation which others mentioned they're encouraging participation of the poor in the process is integral to making it work and in a way this is the calling to love others by simply giving things we're not entering into a relationship with people and walking with them so participation is not just a means to an end but a legitimate end in its own right okay so those are the three sort of ideas to summarize out of development so

[ 33 : 48 ] Corbett and Fickert discussed this in two arenas one is poverty in North America as I gave that illustration but also poverty in the majority world so in North America some of their suggestions I'll just go through a few of them having the poor run the soup kitchen rather than serving and to serve their community rather than running it for them for a food bank involving the poor with invitations to job search support financial skills Bible studies and holistically addressing issues relationally and I won't read you that passage because we're running short on time and then I guess a suggestion for this that the example that I talked about where the the church was handing out toys at Christmas time was to offer the materially poor parents to buy toys at reduced cost to buy the donated toys at reduced cost would be a suggestion so I'm not sure I'm completely satisfied with that I think there's more that could happen there but that's that's a start in in a better direction is what they're suggesting so the focus of what I'm interested in is Malawi and so the the this is the majority world one of the suggestions they make is microfinance it's not just providing loans but also providing banking services you know savings and insurance as a way of reducing hurdles to as as one someone said here enabling and reducing hurdles in terms of small business engineers without borders

Canada has gone over the last 15 years through this interesting journey from looking at technological solutions to becoming more relationally oriented which is a very curious thing for a group of engineers to do and one of their slogans is to remember Dorothy as a woman in an African country who they have as their reminder to work for people and one of the interesting things they found was when they went to Malawi that they found that 70% of the water points places where people can draw water were broken so they came and they found that someone had dug a well then that had broken someone else had provided pipes from the hills to provide water distribution and those were broken and so 70% of these projects ended in failure so now their goals in their projects is to they're actually currently working with the government of Malawi to develop ways of getting the community to own these water points and to provide support to the community so that they can repair them and maintain them sort of like creating community water associations to take care of that so that's kind of a more holistic way of addressing that and so I already mentioned the treadle pumps this was a project it's usually the pump itself right so the handle or you know it could be as simple as a bolt that the handle pivots on and I guess you know we would be quick to find a replacement bolt but for whatever I mean they're trying to understand the reasons why people would just leave it broken and not find a way to fix it and to address that in some sense right so yeah it's a difficult it's a you can't find enough parts aren't available or no one takes charge and says okay I'm going to find a bolt for this or adapting something else to be in the right place could be a variety of reasons yeah yeah and so so this example that I mentioned of treadle pumps was selling them rather than giving them away and having setting up local shops to repair them and to manufacture them and this became a business that people were interested in once it got off its feet it sort of took care of itself because people wanted them and businesses wanted to sell them and it became part of the life of the country and in that sense sustainable okay so I've given a whole bunch of ideas here and so I'll just mention so helping without hurting was an Amazon bestseller and whatever that means we've heard Brian Fickert speak at First Baptist downtown earlier this year he's a very good speaker Susan liked his presentation better than the book so if you're frustrated with the book you can you can you have a sympathetic ear over here one of the things that happened is that a lot of people sort of I mean this raises the bar right I mean we can't just give something and feel good you know we were meant to be in relationship with people walking alongside this is far more challenging and I think a lot of people a lot of the response that Steve and Brian have gotten back is that people are throwing up their hands saying well then I'm not going to do anything right if doing something is going to cause harm then I shouldn't do anything and so they've come out now with an expanded edition of their book which is the one I'm showing you in which they added a fourth part talking about about that and about how to move forward and not giving up so well I mean [ 40 : 39 ] I can feel that as well myself I mean it's hard enough to think about poverty hard enough to get myself in a place where I you know to move forward and do something and then to say ah but how do I do this effectively and well makes it yet more difficult and but I guess I guess that's where we have to rely on God to help us do that and to move forward and I think I've been actually encouraged by this because I think it's good to be aware of these things and and yeah it feels it yeah okay so then Malawi I guess I have a few more minutes we're at 950 okay so what have we been doing

I guess I'll try to find a clean piece of paper sorry they ran out of pages and I just turned it around but it's not quite doing it okay so in the first instance in Malawi we've been developing a relationship with Malawi that's been part of the mandate of the Malawi committee even before I was a part of it which is quite marvelous that this was acknowledged as the very first and primary thing that we should be doing so that's praying and supporting each other and I think we when visitors came from Malawi we have failed at first and we are struggling now to have them minister to us not just feel that that you know we need to show ourselves as an example to them and incorporating them in the services and having them speak to us that's tricky and difficult but something that I think we'd like to see more of financially we're supporting the diocese of the upper shiri we're providing salary support for the priests needy priests we're helping seminarians to attend a local seminary to increase the number of priests in the diocese and our focus over the last couple of years has been Sunday school development supporting a Sunday school coordinator and members of our congregation that have worked with the members in Malawi doing Sunday school development and that's been very relational very working together

listening both ways and being contextually sensitive I think so I feel like we're sort of moving in the right direction that way we're interested in doing some youth development the committee's headed in that direction that's a little trickier how do we do that how do we have youth go to Malawi and not be asked to preach immediately that's a tricky thing and so that's our financial support to the diocese itself then I think there's also been a growing desire to support the churches and the members we get a lot of requests as the committee for various things some of which are easy to turn down others are quite difficult to turn down ask to build roofs on churches or provide trucks or things like this and so we find ourselves struggling with that one of the things that's happened in the last years that several father

Francis who was here not the last set of visitors but the previous set got quite excited because Opportunity International had set up a bank in Malawi and was excited to get loans for members of his parish and in his community through that and so we've set up a partnership between Opportunity International and the Diocese of Upper Shiri and ourselves to help in that way and that's something that I'll talk about more next time about microfinance and how does that work what works about that and what are the weaknesses but it's one way of helping and if anyone's interested in that you can talk to me or the other Malawi members okay so that any questions or comments or

Jones when I tell you