Understanding Biblical Justice as a Desirable Framework for Participatory Development in Missions

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Abstract

Misconstrued worldviews, lack of cultural knowledge, and misunderstandings in language are a few areas that display the potential for harm inherent in missions work. For the majority of Westerners, charity is the framework for missions, yet it is not biblical. The Hebrew words found over and over again in the Old Testament, *tzedakah* and *mishpat*, are the words commonly ascribed to the Western concept of charity. These words, however, actually translate to a concept of "justice" while the word "charity" as Westerners know it is not found in the Bible. Through theological study, research on development principles, and experience as a missionary to Mexico, this paper will address theology, theory, and practice to move toward a more biblical framework for long-term missionaries. By developing a biblical justice framework for missions theologically, missionaries are better equipped to understand the Great Commission. By utilizing tools of participatory development through the lens of biblical justice, relationship building becomes a core aspect of missional work.

Missions work is full of potential harm. For long-term missionaries, in some regards, the risk factor for harm is lessened as the missionary spends more time in a culture and in a community. However, in some areas of life, the risk factor is increased as trust is gained from the community. There is an immense responsibility on the missionary's part to stay accountable to the most unbiased version of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Books like *When Helping Hurts* and *Walking With the Poor* (Corbett and Fickert, 2009) offer helpful frameworks for better understanding such risks. Most long-term missionary memoirs are also full of tips and tricks, usually consisting of lessons learned the hard way.

At the base of this significant risk is a theological issue seemingly inherent to Western-culture missionaries. Certainly, this issue is clear in short-term missions, but it applies to long-term as well. When missionaries move from a framework of Western charity to a biblical worldview of justice, many of these risks are lessened. While the hermeneutics may sound relatively simple, the practice usually involves laying down a life-long learned Western compassion, then intentionally choosing a new and often difficult path. For Western missionaries who serve in community-based cultures, they are likely already wrestling with many of these issues. The challenge is no easy task as it requires a leveling of power within the missionary's circle of influence. Working through this challenge begins with an awareness of Western[1] charity.

Charity as the Current Western Framework for Missions

Sandy Hook Elementary School underwent tragedy in December of 2012 when 20 children and six women were murdered by 20-year-old Adam Lanza who had behavioral problems but no prior criminal record. Lanza, before entering the school, killed his mother; next he killed 26 people at the school; finally, he killed himself. Within a week, the high-income town had received tens of thousands of teddy bears, Barbie dolls, soccer balls, board games, and more.[2] Local United Way spokeswoman, Isabel Almeida, asked the nation to stop sending gifts to Newtown, and instead, to send gifts to "a school in your community or an organization that serves low-income children who are in need this holiday season, and do it in memory of our children."

The United States is full of people who respond to crisis with *reactionary* compassion. The horrific events that took place at Sandy Hook provoked a reactionary compassion of teddy bears and Barbie dolls. When Americans hear about tragedy or injustices that touch their hearts, they want to *do* something quickly. As a society, doing seems to be the first step, even before filtering. Compassion, however, should be learned. In order to reduce the risk of missionary harm, missionaries must birth a *learned* compassion that begins first with mediation, prayer, and discussion with the locals before any action is taken.

In his book *God of the Empty-Handed*, Jayakumar Christian says that Christians must focus on the viewpoint from God's heavenly throne. "An examination of the hereafter and a missional response to the powerless based on a vision of the future will surely enable missions to move away from mere reactionism. Very often facts and figures about the poor are so compelling that we are urged to react or pursue empty pragmatism."[3] When missionaries start with the earthly perspective, they are bound to react in earthly ways. But when they start with a focus on the eternal, they "affirm the fact that the future of God has already invaded the present," Christian says. Reflection is a necessary step before action.[4]

Defining Charity

Reactionary compassion may be the gateway into what will eventually lead to learned compassion, but it takes intentionality to move from one side to the other. Additionally, the word 'charity' must be defined.

Charity, for the sake of this paper, is not the same word found in 1 Corinthians 13:3 (KJV) that says, "The greatest of these is charity." Charity in that instance is the Greek word *agape*, which is more commonly translated into English as the word love, though its more specific definition is unconditional, unmerited love.

In researching the word charity—outside of the agape translations—I found that the word *charity* as Westerners typically use it today does not occur in the Scriptures. The following chart has the passages that come up in a search of modern English Bible translations for the word charity. In all of these passages, one English word is used to translate four Hebrew words. Those words are:

1. *tzedek* (righteous)
2. *tzedakah* (acts of justice)
3. *nedavah* (donation)
4. *matanah* (gift)

The following table describes the biblical passages on the left and the English versions on the right where the word "charity" was found.[5]

Passage	Version
Daniel 4:23-25 (1)	Complete Jewish Bible
Matthew 6:1-4 (2)	Amplified Bible, JB Phillips, Living Bible, Orthodox Jewish Bible
Mark 12:43 (2)	Orthodox Jewish Bible
Luke 11:41 (2)	New American Standard Bible
Luke 12:33 (2)	New American Standard Bible
Luke 19:8 (2)	Orthodox Jewish Bible
Acts 9:36 (2)	Amplified Bible, English Standard Version, Expanded Bible, Holman Christian Standard Bible, Mounce Reverse-Interlinear New Testament, New American Standard Bible
Acts 10:1-3 (2)	Living Bible
Acts 10:4 (2)	JB Phillips, Mounce Reverse-Interlinear New Testament
Acts 10:31 (2)	Complete Jewish Bible, Holman Christian Standard Bible, Mounce Reverse-Interlinear New Testament
Acts 24:17 (3)	Amplified Bible
1 Corinthians 16:3 (4)	Amplified Bible
2 Corinthians 9:10 (1)	Amplified Bible

The most common verse that uses the English word charity is found in Acts 9:36, where Tabitha is described as "abounding in good deeds and acts of charity" (AMPC). The Hebrew translation of the original Greek word, according to the Orthodox Jewish Bible, is *tzedakah*, which means "a life of right relationships."[6] Another description of *tzedakah* is "acts of justice, *i.e.*, benignant or gracious deeds."[7]

Charity, in the Western sense of the word, does not conjure up the idea of justice or graciousness. For the purpose of my graduate studies, a focus group was held with church leaders in the Southeastern part of the United States. The focus group discussed charity and missions work.

"My views on charity are a little jaded: handouts and free stuff," said Roxane Almond, lead pastor at Boger's Chapel United Methodist Church (UMC) in North Carolina and focus group participant. "Charity does not change a person's situation," said participant Nancy Friend, missions pastor at Crossroads UMC. The group agreed that charity usually signifies a top-down approach to helping others.

Definitions of charity often involve the words *poor* and *in need*. Charity, according to *Webster-Merriam*, *Oxford*, and *Cambridge*, therefore, is an economically-loaded word. Power is assumed to be stronger in the one—the rich benefactor—than in the other—the needy beneficiary. Benefactor and its synonyms all assume a power play:

- Benefactor - with the root *bene-well* and *factor-maker*
- Donor with the root *don-gift*

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- Patron with the root *lord/master/protector* maybe *father,* the foundation for words like *patronage, patronize*; even the foundation of the word *pattern:* a patron was a model to be imitated.[8]

That economic bias must be leveled out when missionaries choose to view the world through a framework of Biblical justice, a life of right relationships.

In the beginning of the Bible, God creates man. He then says it is not good for man to be alone and then creates woman. One could argue that from the beginning of creation, human beings were created for right relationships. Human beings, therefore, intrinsically desire right relationship. Justice is a universal need.

Defining Poverty

In order to see this whole matter more clearly, the word *poor* must also be defined, or rather, redefined. With a better grasp of what poverty is, charity becomes more clearly unbalanced. Bryant Myers, a development practitioner, warns in *Walking With the Poor* not to be one-dimensional in defining poverty:

> If poverty is the absence of things, then the solution is to provide them. This often leads to the outsider becoming the development "Santa Claus," bringing all good things: food, well drilling, education, and proclamation. The poor are seen as passive recipients, incomplete human beings we make complete and whole through our largess. This unwitting attitude has two very negative consequences. …We act as if God's gifts were given to us and none to the poor. This attitude increases their poverty and tempts us to play god in the lives of the poor. Second, our attitude about ourselves can become messianic. We are tempted to believe that we are the deliver[er]s of the poor, that we make their lives complete. We can inadvertently harbor a belief that we are the ones who save. Such an attitude is not good for our souls.[9]

Charity creates space for missionaries to be Santa Clauses. But at some point, the missionaries' bag of tricks will be empty, and the community will be worse off for believing the myth that dependency yields greatness.

Myers worked with World Vision International for over 30 years. He discusses the concept of focusing on identity and vocation in transformational development: "A flawed process can make the poor poorer by further devaluing their view of themselves and what they have."[10] There's a certain level of dignity that is stripped when a human being is looked upon as a charity case.

Relief, Rehabilitation, Development

In the spectrum of development work, there are three main areas: relief, rehabilitation, and development. When disaster strikes, one cannot expect development to happen right away. First, relief needs to happen. This is when disaster relief teams of doctors, medical personnel, and seasoned relief workers who understand and follow emergency protocol are sent into the crisis area. Charity, in the sense of handouts, is appropriate during this time. When a tsunami hits,

Doctors Without Borders can't go to the affected area and demand payment for their services. Relief is needed immediately. Blankets and other nonfood items are brought in, food shelters are set up, purified water is handed out, and temporary housing shelters are created. However, if two years down the road this is still happening, it would be easy to see that something is wrong.

Missionaries, whether church planters or development-based, must be aware of the development spectrum and hone in on which area their current project is addressing. If a project or a church plant suited for relief is happening in an area that actually needs development, the risk of damage is high even before project implementation begins.

Rehabilitation is the second step. The defining characteristic of the rehabilitation phase is recovery. Let's say the disaster or crisis is a domestic violence case where a woman leaves her abusive home and finds shelter at a safe house. Relief would be providing her with temporary shelter at the safe house for about a month. Rehabilitation would involve her finding a sustainable place to live, like an apartment that she moves into for the foreseeable future. In this phase, she is recovering what the crisis took away from her. Rehabilitation moves into development in this process as long-term and self-sustaining goals are set.

Charity has an expiration date because hand-outs and self-sustainment contradict each other. The economically poor father who cannot provide Christmas gifts for his family does not simply need relief. He needs development. He needs new opportunities for a sustainable life, so that he can choose and provide those gifts the following Christmas. Church planters should enter an area thinking through these phases so that they actually partner with the locals rather than creating dependence. The missionary who plants a church in a charity framework will have a hard time leaving, as much of the work and the funding is dependent on outside resources. On the other hand, the church planter who enters into an area with the goal of self-sustainment baked into the process will more easily reject unsustainable charity.

"Development is a lifelong *process*, not a two-week *product*," say Corbett and Fikkert in *When Helping Hurts.*[11] Not understanding this distinction may be the conundrum of missions and why damage is so often done. Western missionaries unconsciously often seek products, not processes, and in the end either single-handedly force those products to reproduce or feel they have failed because there is no quantifiable success to bring back to donors.

The Western Church must let go of the idea that success equates to quantifiable products in missions. Most of the successes are often invisible. Deeper relationships with friends, a closer relationship between spouses, a stronger faith, a quicker release of inexplicable peace in the midst of life's many storms—these are examples of development in a missionary's life and in a local Christian's life.

The Potential Arrogance of Charity

Claudio Oliver, a Brazilian pastor who has been working with urban poor in Brazil for more than two decades, wrote an essay in 2009 called "Why I Stopped Serving the Poor." He discusses the arrogance of "the stretched-out hand from top down."

> Over the years I've discovered that the very position of serving the poor from a commitment to "liberate" them, has been filled with a sense of superiority. A kind of

superiority that is translated into giving others what I have, assuming through my actions that what I have or do is what he/she should have or do. This subtle translation is noticed in the subtle arrogance of the so-called politics of 'inclusion,' always trying to put the other inside the box where I live, including them in the sameness of my lifestyle. … All of this led me to give up on serving the poor. … I've given up on helping the poor, given up on serving and saving them. I have rediscovered a hard truth: Jesus doesn't have any good news for those who serve the poor. Jesus didn't come to bring good news of the Kingdom to those who serve the poor; he brought Good News to the poor. He has nothing to say to other saviors who compete with him for the position of Messiah, or Redeemer.[12]

When Oliver started recognizing himself as poor, the gospel had so much more to offer him. "God is not manifest in our ability to heal, but in our need to be healed."[13] Missionaries must take on a posture that they are not merely sent to heal, but they themselves are constantly in need of healing.

As soon as a missionary thinks he has completed the healing process, he starts healing others outside of Christ's redeeming power. Christ's gift of eternal life can only be received in humility, as the receiver is essentially saying that he is in *need* of a redeemer. The receiver therefore must accept the idea that he is the poor. He is the needy. As Elias Andrews in his essay "Heart of Christianity" says, "The first step into this new relationship with God is faith, the soul's complete and utter reliance, in its own insufficiency upon the sufficiency of God."[14]

Defining Biblical Justice

The best way for a missionary not to unconsciously allow locals to create dependency on him or his work is to reframe the power play built into the charity worldview. The missionary's constant dependency on God is his lifeline for modeling biblical justice rather than Western charity. What follows is an examination of what is meant by "biblical justice."

The Four Brothers Who Ruin Justice

In the first book of the Old Testament lies a story of twin boys, Esau and Jacob. The firstborn, Esau, is loved by his father and becomes a skilled hunter. The younger brother, Jacob, is loved by his mother and becomes a tent dweller. Jacob first deceives Esau in a moment of famished weakness by bartering Esau's birthright for a bowl of stew. His mother then plans for him to steal his brother's blessing—the blessing due to the eldest in Jewish custom. Never does the younger object to his mother's scheme. Instead, he immediately and actively participates, thinking through the deceptive details of what he had to do. The meaning of his name reflects his character; he is a deceiver. In the end, it is this younger son—this deceiver—who becomes the father of the Israelites. It is the younger son whose name is often referenced when future generations talk of God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In the end, it is the younger son, whose name God changes and then calls his people by that same name. The Israelites are the strivers, the strugglers, because Jacob strove and struggled with God.

In the New Testament lies another story of two brothers. In Luke 15, Jesus tells the story often called "The Prodigal Son." The elder brother is a faithful servant, never openly rebelling against his father and never leaving his father's house. The younger brother, however, decides to boldly

request his inheritance before it was time to receive it, and then he leaves his father's house and goes off squandering all his inheritance. He ends up in the midst of famine and gets a job feeding slop to pigs. Things get so bad that he begins to covet the pigs' food. Thoughts of his father's house haunt him; the servants who once served him have a better life than his current one. So, he heads back home, hoping his father will let him return as a hired laborer. When he was close to approaching his former residence, his father runs to meet him in the road. The father smothers his son with hugs and kisses, barely hearing him beg for forgiveness as he yells at his servants to get the son new clothes, new shoes, and the family ring. The father throws a party for his son, infuriating the elder brother who will not join the festivities. The father leaves the party, tracks the elder son down, and asks him what's wrong.

"Look how many years I've stayed here serving you, never giving you one moment of grief, but have you ever thrown a party for me and my friends? Then this son of yours who has thrown away your money on whores—shows up and you go all out with a feast!" (Luke 15:29-30, MSG). The father replies, "Son, you don't understand. You're with me all the time, and everything that is mine is yours—but this is a wonderful time, and we had to celebrate. This brother of yours was dead, and he's alive! He was lost, and he's found!" (Luke 15:31-32, MSG). That is the end of the story. It is never told if the elder comes to understand, or if the brothers reconcile. At the beginning of Luke 15, Luke sheds light on why Jesus told this story: the Pharisees were grumbling at Jesus because he ate with sinners as if they were old friends while the Pharisees had strived at great lengths to remain pure and holy.

These two stories really mess with the Western idea of justice. It is the faithful older brother who deserved the party. It was Esau who deserved his father's blessing. These stories prove that God's modus operandi relies neither on merit nor human tradition.

In looking at justice from a biblical standpoint, not only does the word 'justice' need to be redefined but so also does the word 'merit.' The Almighty thought it just to send his righteous Son to die in place of sinners. The Holy One—whose righteousness is as pure as snow, in comparison to human righteousness, which is as dirty as a menstrual cloth—called humans His children. That is not justice as Westerners know it.

Earthly justice, from a Western framework, involves rapists getting the death penalty and terrorists being blown up by their own bombs. However, staking claim in the Christian doctrine of salvation inherently signifies that one accepts a heavenly version of justice. "An earthly view of justice is inward-looking, self-serving, and protects our own self-worth. Heavenly justice makes us admit that we're part of, and contribute to, the systems of oppression," said writer Laurel Fiorelli.[15]

The kingdom of heaven is made up of liars and cheaters who have been redeemed. Redemption is not only possible for deceivers, but redemption-for-deceivers is the essence of the good news. On the surface, this upside-down kingdom seems unfair to those who have worked hard their whole lives. It seems unfair for those who have been faithful their whole lives. Because humans live in systems based on accomplishments. If one does something good, one deserves something good. If one does something bad, one deserves something bad. This is the core of the American idea of justice. But God is not an American. Good does not always equate to salvation. Bad does

not always equate to condemnation. Eugene Peterson paraphrased the prophet Ezekiel's words well:

> A good person's good life won't save him when he decides to rebel, and a bad person's bad life won't prevent him from repenting of his rebellion. A good person who sins can't expect to live when he chooses to sin. It's true that I tell good people, 'Live! Be alive!' But if they trust in their good deeds and turn to evil, that good life won't amount to a hill of beans. They'll die for their evil life. On the other hand, if I tell a wicked person, 'You'll die for your wicked life,' and he repents of his sin and starts living a righteous and just life — being generous to the down-and-out, restoring what he had stolen, cultivating life-nourishing ways that don't hurt others — he'll live. He won't die. None of his sins will be kept on the books. He's doing what's right, living a good life. He'll live. (Ezekiel 33:12-16, MSG).

Humans can never be *good enough*. If fairness ruled the world and everyone lived by the scrutiny of the eyes of the public, Mother Teresa would receive eternal life but Saul-turned-Paul would not. While obvious heaven-goers have few external sins for the public to see, there lies in each human being an array of internal sins that God is not blind to. Romans 6:23 does not distinguish between these internal and external sins by caveating "The wages of *external* sin is death." Rather, within the confines of this vast definition of sin, no one can say he deserves eternal life. This is crucial to the gospel. Fairness would result in even the most heavenly of earthly saints receiving punishment for all of his internal and external sins. God is not *fair,* but He is *just*.

Justice the Noun

Biblical justice is the act of practicing the rightness of God on earth, therefore making the coming kingdom of heaven a present reality. Anytime creation glorifies the Creator, God's justice is set in motion on earth. Every time nature does what it is created to do, it brings God glory. His glory ushers in His presence; and, where He is, justice reigns. Micah Challenge USA, a nonprofit organization that seeks to end extreme poverty, published the book *Live Justly*, in which they define Biblical justice as "the state of wholeness due all of God's creation."[16]

Perhaps justice feels like a harsh term for Americans. Justice conjures ideas of the legal system, men on death row, prison bars, and penal codes. For Americans of color, the word *justice* might automatically provoke ideas fully opposite of biblical justice based on those same American penal systems that have been systemically oppressive. Justice through the lens of the American culture will always be lacking. In order to fully define God's justice, one must recognize that God is not a citizen of any particular country or subgroup of that country.

In the Spanish language, one word—*justicia*—is expressed by two words in English: justice and righteousness. In Proverbs 21:15, the English Standard Version says, "When justice is done, it is a joy to the righteous but terror to evildoers." The New Living Translation says, "When what is right and fair is done, it is a joy for those who are right with God. But it fills the sinful with fear." In several passages in the Bible, one version will say *justice* while another says *righteousness*.

There are two main Hebrew words, *mishpat* and *tzedakah*, that are the root of the true meaning of the English word justice. This essay leans heavily on Tim Keller's study of justice that can be

found in his book *Generous Justice* [reference?]. In the first chapter, Keller looks at these two Hebrew words. *Mishpat*, he says, "is giving people what they are due, whether punishment or protection or care," and *tzedakah*, he says, is "a life of right relationships." Keller says that the two words are found together over 30 times in the Old Testament conveying the English concept of social justice. Here, a Hebrew glossary discusses these two words further:

- **Mishpatim**: plural of mishpat. (meesh-pah-TEEM) n. Logical laws; Judgments; Laws given for a clearly specified reason. An example would be the commandment to give charity or the prohibitions against theft and murder. These mitzvot are inherently rational and appeal to the need for ethical unity (civil and moral life) within the community. The *mishpatim* are one of the two main subcategories of the concept of *mitzvot* (commandments). Mishpatim is also the name for a weekly Torah portion: Exodus 21:1-24:18.[17]
- **Tzedakah**: (tse-dah-KAH) n. Righteousness; An act of righteousness; Charity; Benevolence; Justice. *Tzedakah* generally refers to the giving of money to help support those in need and the helping institutions of one's community and is considered a religious obligation, distinct from the notions of charity or philanthropy, which are related to the concept of *chesed*.[18]

Research done in English will often include the word charity when describing the Hebrew word t*zedakah*; but, there are two distinctions that many scholars seem to agree on: 1) *tzedakah* derives from the root words justice, just, and righteous but **not** from words like gift or kindness, and 2) the concept of *tzedakah* goes beyond random, sporadic handouts.

Is Justice the Opposite of Love?

Typically, Americans understand justice as punishment and unconditional love as tolerance. By those definitions, it could be argued that justice and love are opposing. However, if justice and unconditional love are seen through a biblical lens, it becomes clear the two intertwine most beautifully. Unconditional love starts where a human being is, offers him what he doesn't deserve, and then reminds him he is meant for so much more. Unconditional love provokes humans to become better individuals, more loving parents, more graceful spouses, kinder, stronger, gentler, and more peaceful human beings.

Dr. Nicholas Wolterstorff warns not to err in thinking that the Old Testament is about justice and the New Testament is about love. He says, "I think it's a deep mistake to think that justice has been superseded in the New Testament."[19] Matthew 12:20 (ESV) quotes a passage from Isaiah 42 saying, "Until he brings justice to victory." The passage is about Christ bringing justice to the Gentiles. Jesus came to fulfill the Old Testament prophecies about justice, not to supersede them. He came to proclaim and bring justice. Wolterstorff says, "We have to reject the idea that love and justice are in conflict. We have to understand love in such a way and justice in such a way that the two fit together hand in glove."[20]

Right relationships are built on the foundation of love, because giving people what they are due is a natural outflow of the heart when love is present. Love and justice must be complementary qualities. If a Christian does not love his neighbor, he will not see the need to treat him justly.

Wolterstorff says, "Justice is always to be done out of love … true love is never unjust."[21] True biblical justice must involve mercy.

Dehumanization

All injustices start with dehumanization. Dehumanizing is easy to do among violators of human rights. I lived about 45 minutes outside of Monterrey, Mexico, at a time when the drug war was spreading into the city that was supposedly immune to it. The rumor heard was that Monterrey was previously off limits because some head drug traffickers of the different gangs had homes in a prominent neighborhood in the city, and there was an unwritten rule between the different trafficking groups that peace was to reside in Monterrey.

According to news reports, however, two cartels that had previously been allies turned against each other, one of which had controlled Monterrey, sparking battles in the industrial capital.[22] Other reports say that the U.S.'s demand for drugs and provision of weaponry along with political and law enforcement corruption that came to a head exposed Monterrey—only hours away from the U.S. border—to the war that had been raging in other regions of the country.[23] Worldly peace never lasts, and hangings began on the bridges of the city. First it was just brutal violence between the rival gangs. Then innocent bystanders were killed. The fear that had long hit *Regios* (Mexicans living in the Monterrey area) at an arm's distance—they had heard of things happening hours away in Durango, Sinaloa, and Mexico City—suddenly swelled inside their hearts, as the drug war struck neighbors and friends.

Brand new SUVs seen driving around town triggered fear. Owners might be drug traffickers. Rumors of women being abducted on the side of the road made me change my own exercise routine. In January 2013, 18 members of a mariachi band were abducted, dismembered, and dumped into a well about three miles from my home.[24] I felt justified in her hatred-filled thoughts toward traffickers. But even those dark thoughts were pierced by the light of the gospel that says everyone is on the same playing field. Everyone has the same potential for good and for bad within him.

When one hears about ISIS attacks, child abusers, or human traffickers, revenge seems a justifiable option. Yet Christ offers the best response to mimic when he says, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34, ESV).

In his book *Strength to Love*, Martin Luther King Jr. says this about the Supreme Court justices who decided that African Americans could not be American citizens in 1857: "The justices who rendered this decision were not wicked men. But they were victims of spiritual and intellectual blindness. They knew not what they did. The whole system of slavery was largely perpetuated by sincere though spiritually ignorant people."[25] King, who lived his life and lost it reversing this perspective, was able to say that these men were "not wicked, but blind." Christ and King saw their enemies as morally blind. These were enemies that physically abused them, enemies that threatened their lives regularly, and enemies who ultimately took their lives. "There will be no permanent solution to the race problem until oppressed men develop the capacity to love their enemies," says King. He adds that if people want to be called Christians, they must fight against being intellectually and morally blind. "Intellectual and moral blindness is a dilemma that man inflicts upon himself by his tragic misuse of freedom and his failure to use his mind to its fullest

capacity. One day we will learn that the heart can never be totally right if the head is totally wrong."[26]

When Christ admonishes Christians to set the oppressed free, those in the business of social justice stand up ready and willing. But when Christ tells Christians to open the eyes of the blind, many Christians think, *Well, we are not in the business of healing. We'll leave that to those who are*. Maybe Christ is talking about the intellectually and morally blind inasmuch as he is talking about the physically blind; which means, he who seeks social justice must seek to heal both oppressed *and* oppressor. This is the call of the missionary. Paulo Freire says something similar to King's words above in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed:*

> Because it is a distortion of being more fully human, sooner or later being less human leads the oppressed to struggle against those who made them so. In order for this struggle to have meaning, the oppressed must not, in seeking to regain their humanity (which is a way to create it), become in turn oppressors of the oppressors, but rather restorers of the humanity of both.[27]

It takes immense amounts of self-control and discipline to fight the temptation to oppress, regardless if one's label is oppressor, oppressed, or a bystander looking onto the oppression. Restoring humanity is the opposite of dehumanization. Christ called both oppressors (tax collectors) and the oppressed (fishermen) to become his disciples. He worked to redeem humanity in all its forms by forgiving sins, healing physical ailments, and challenging those around him to do what seemed impossible; that is, "Go sin no more" (John 8:11), "Go sell all you have and give to the poor" (Mark 10:21), "Go love God with all your being" (Luke 10:27), and "Go make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19).

The missionary must remember that restoring humanity involves both individual redemptive justice and systematic redemptive justice. When Jesus spoke to individuals and to groups, he challenged individuals and he challenged the systems of his time.

International Justice Mission is a global nonprofit that works to protect the poor from violence. While the organization has done a great job in individual redemptive justice, they are also working toward broadening their focus to systematic redemption. For every innocent man in jail that they are able to set free through tireless persistency, there is another innocent man who will take the first one's place until the system is redeemed. For every girl that is saved from sex trafficking, another enters into it. Redemption is needed not only in individual lives, but also in systems and cycles, infrastructures, and societal norms (personal communication, 2014).

Usually, those cyclical infrastructural injustices can ignite a sense of righteous anger. But that can only take the missionary so far. For the same reason Christians should abstain from getting drunk on alcohol, they cannot let themselves get drunk with anger or hatred. For a drunk man is a blind man, and the blind cannot be healed with blindness. Blindness breeds more blindness, just as violence produces more violence and justice more justice.

When victims of injustice actively choose not to respond in anger, it is a clear sign of the gospel in effect on earth. When Michael Brown was unjustly shot dead in Ferguson, Missouri, his father, Michael Brown Sr., condemned violence as a response. He said, "Hurting others or

destroying property is not the answer. …I do not want my son's death to be in vain. I want it to lead to incredible change, positive change, change that makes the St. Louis region better for everyone."[28]

Missionaries must have this same mentality. They will certainly face injustice, and they cannot combat it with isolated anger or numbness. A missionary is a justice worker, working toward positive, systemic change to bring the kingdom of heaven to earth.

The Aerial View of Justice Work

This upside-down kingdom is both a present and future reality. In John 10:10, Jesus says he came to bring abundant life. When Jesus prayed his most famous prayer, he said, "Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10, ESV). The *on earth* part of that is something Robert Linthicum calls the *shalom community*, which he says the book of Deuteronomy describes in detail. Linthicum says:

> Shalom is an exceedingly rich concept, a comprehensive word dealing with and covering all the relationships of daily life, expressing the ideal state of life in Israel and, indeed, the entire world. The concept of shalom essentially encompasses what the Israelites saw as being foundational to life: being in community with each other. … So when Jews wish each other "shalom," they are wishing for each other health, security, long life, prosperity, successful completion of an enterprise, victory in war. In other words, they are wishing God's best for the entirety of a person's life, for all her relationships with others, for all he sets his hand to do. And they are wishing for such fullness both for that person's life and for the Jewish community throughout the world.[29]

If shalom is the ideal state of community and justice is the ideal state of relationships, then justice will automatically lead to shalom, and shalom will not be possible without justice. Wolterstorff says it like this in his 1981 Kuyper Lectures, *Until Justice and Peace Embrace*:

> If individuals are not granted what is due them, if their claim on others is not acknowledged by those others, if others do not carry out their obligations to them, then shalom is wounded. That is so even if there are no *feelings* of hostility between them and the others. Shalom cannot be secured in an unjust situation by managing to get all concerned to feel content with their lot in life. Shalom would not have been present *even if* all the blacks in the United States had been content in their state of slavery; it would not be present in South Africa *even if* all the blacks there felt happy. It is because shalom is an ethical community that it is wounded when justice is absent.[30]

Bringing justice into a situation is the first step in leading a community toward shalom. While missionaries must allow community leaders to lead as they walk alongside a community, they must understand the role of justice in communal shalom. The call to justice is not just one for individual Christians. It is a call for the Church as a whole. A community is stronger than an individual, and a community keeps an individual on course through encouragement, affirmation, and accountability.

> People who are reading and living the word under the discipling of the Holy Spirit should be a significant source of inspiration and perspiration working for life and shalom. When

the church is its best, it is a sign of the values of the kingdom and is contributing holistic disciples to the community for its well-being.[31]

When churches become shalom communities, they take part in their divine role as the bride of Christ. Missionaries must remember they are part of the Church's great call to create shalom in Jerusalem, Judea, and to the ends of the earth.

Romans 14:17 (ESV and OJB) says, "The kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness [tzedek] peace [shalom] and joy in the Holy Spirit." When Christians begin to see justice as the Bible declares it to be, they are more equipped to take up Christ's call to faithfully bring forth justice. Missionaries must encourage, admonish, and hold each other accountable, so that the Church does not grow faint or get discouraged until God has established justice in the earth.

Why Participatory Development from a Framework of Justice?

David Avila has been the pastor of Centro de Fe, Esperanza y Amor El Carmen for more than 15 years. Avila is a visionary. He actively takes steps to implement a vision regardless of his economic circumstances. Avila says there are two distinct types of missionaries. The first type is those who tell Avila what they want to do for him. "Instead of helping us, we feel pressured to do the things they want us to do," Avila said. The second type is those who listen to Avila's vision and ask to join in. "They don't come saying 'We do this *this* way,' but they ask how I want them to do it." Humility is the key to the participatory toolbox. Without it, the tools cannot be accessed.

Partnering in Development

In order to partner in development, the Church needs to understand where the world of international development is heading. After years of doing top-down development, most professionals agree that participatory development is a better answer to poverty. The Church needs to be more educated on what participatory tools are available.

According to the Asian Development Bank, "Participatory development is a process through which stakeholders can influence and share control over development initiatives, and over the decisions and resources that affect themselves."[32] [more specific ref needed] Simply put, participatory development happens when a person participates in his own development.

Though participatory development costs more money and requires more time, Corbett and Fikkert say, "It's often more efficient in the long run because it's more likely to result in workable and sustainable interventions."[33] Participatory development comes in many forms, including both passive and active methods, which will be discussed. However, the sobering reality is that each of these is a tool, and *how* a tool is used is just as important as *which* tool is used. If missionaries use these tools but maintain the mindset that they are in charge, the "participatory" aspect of the project becomes tainted and futile.

Unfortunately, there is much research that points to NGOs doing this exact thing: masking top-down approaches with bottom-up phrases. This is why biblical justice is so important. Without a framework of biblical justice, missionaries will end up on a pedestal with their development toolbox executing top-down projects masked in trendy, bottom-up phrases. Right relationship

must be the framework from which participatory development is built on. If this is done with a charity mindset, the results will be unsustainable, ineffective, and potentially damaging to the locals. This starts with a proper understanding of participation.

Typology of Participation

The following chart comes from Jules Pretty, professor of environment and society and deputy vice-chancellor at the University of Essex in England. This is his *Typology of Participation: How People Participate in Development Programmes and Projects*.[34]

Typology	Characteristic of Each Type
1. Manipulative Participation	Participation is simply a pretense, with 'people's' representatives on official boards but who are unelected and have no power.
2. Passive Participation	People participate by being told what has been decided or has already happened. It involves unilateral announcements by an administration or project management without any listening to people's responses. The information being shared belongs only to external professionals.
3. Participation by Consultation	People participate by being consulted or by answering questions. External agents define problems and information gathering processes, and so control analysis. Such a consultative process does not concede any share in decision-making, and professionals are under no obligation to take on board people's views.
4. Participation for Material Incentives	People participate by contributing resources, for example labor, in return for food, cash or other material incentives. Farmers may provide the fields and labor, but are involved in neither experimentation nor the process of learning. It is very common to see this called participation, yet people have no stake in prolonging technologies or practices when the incentives end.
5. Functional Participation	Participation seen by external agencies as a means to achieve project goals, especially reduced costs. People may participate by forming groups to meet predetermined objectives related to the project. Such involvement may be interactive and involve shared decision making, but tends to arise only after major decisions have already been made by external agents. At worst, local people may still only be coopted to serve external goals.
6. Interactive Participation	People participate in joint analysis, development of action plans and formation or strengthening of local institutions. Participation is seen as a right, not just the means to achieve project goals. The process involves interdisciplinary methodologies that seek multiple perspectives and make use of systemic and structured learning processes. As groups take control over local decisions and determine how available resources are used, so they have a stake in maintaining structures or practices.

7. Self-Mobilization	People participate by taking initiatives independently of external institutions to change systems. They develop contacts with external institutions for resources and technical advice they need, but retain control over how resources are used. Self-mobilization can spread if governments and NGOs provide an enabling framework of support. Such self-initiated mobilization may or may not challenge existing distributions of wealth and power.

As missionaries walk alongside of community leaders, this typology can be used as a tool to better understand how the community interacts with its spiritual leaders. It may also help reveal manipulative participation practices that need to change.

Some Tools and Approaches

The following chart has two categories: tools and approaches of development. While the chart could be filled in with more of each, this is a brief overview. Development projects often include several tools. The approaches are specific perspectives of development processes while using tools that help build that worldview.

Tools	Descriptions
Focus Group	A method of research in which a targeted group of people are invited to discuss their ideas about a certain topic. Many participatory development methods use this as one step of several in the research process.
Charrette	A collaborative, mediated meeting where all stakeholders attend and voice their ideas for a community solution to a community problem.
Transect Walk	A process of community mapping by actually walking around a community slowly, diagraming what is seen, and talking to residents along the way. This can be done through an environmental lens, a social lens, and even, a spiritual lens.
Stakeholder Chart	A list of anyone who could be affected by a particular project. This could include residents, religious leaders, political leaders, crime leaders, youth, children, the elderly. For example, how will helping an evangelical congregation build its church affect the Catholic congregants in the area? How will it affect other evangelicals not a part of that congregation? Will it attract the attention of the government? Of gangs? Of any anti-church groups?
Stakeholder Interviews	A process of interviewing representatives from all stakeholder categories for a specific project.
Seasonal Calendar[35]	A method of visualizing the differences in seasons in a particular community including illnesses, natural events, economic activities, etc.
Asset Mapping[36]	A process of creating maps of already existing assets within a community.

Conflict Analysis	An assessment of potential and/or current conflict within a community.
Gender Analysis	An assessment of what daily life looks like for women side-by-side what daily life looks like for a man. This analysis includes any inequality issues and discusses what effect a project may have on these issues.
SWOT analysis	An analysis that carefully considers strengths (S), weaknesses (W), opportunities (O), and threats (T) of a project, an organization, or a community.
Approaches	**Descriptions**
Self-Help Approach	An approach to poverty alleviation in which strategic economic, social, and political needs are met through the creation of a small group of peers called a self-help group (SHG). This is based on the idea that the voice of a collective is more powerful than the voice of an individual. Usually, SHGs are made up of women, and oftentimes they create microcredit groups.
Participatory Action Research (PAR)[37]	An approach in which the aim of the research is to ignite action, balance power between researcher and researched, and involve those being researched as active participants in the process.
Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA)[38]	A research approach in which members of the community form part of a team to research and discover aspects of their community. They then present their analysis to the rest of the community to form a community solution. Outsiders act only as facilitators while the community itself determines its own results. This can be done through resource maps, social maps, wealth rankings, local perception surveys, Venn diagrams, seasonal calendars, focus groups, interviews and community workshops.
Participatory Learning and Action (PLA)[39]	A research approach of analyzing and evaluating a community through maps, timelines, transect walks, ranking activities and Venn diagrams. "PLA is sometimes used to describe PRA but is broader and includes other similar or related approaches and methods."[40]
Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (SLA)[41]	An approach to poverty alleviation that focuses on the economic poor's expression of his own opportunities and lack of opportunities to sustain his own household.
Asset-based Community Development (ABCD)	The opposite of this approach is needs-based community development which looks at what needs/gaps a community has and then tries to provide those. ABCD, however, looks at what assets exist already in a community allowing the community to recognize its strengths and build on those in order to make the community better.
Rights-based Community Development	This approach is founded on the idea that human rights are universal. A community or subgroup within a community whose rights are being violated are empowered to regain those rights while the group of people responsible for violating/withholding the rights are held accountable and/or capacitated to fulfill those rights.

Values-based Holistic Community Development[42]	This approach was developed by Heifer International. While it uses self-help strategies, it "aims to help communities identify their values and develop their visions, empower them to achieve these visions, and to pass these skills and resources on to other communities."
Appreciative Inquiry (AI)[43]	A strategy for development that begins with already existing strengths in a community. This is done through interviews, affirmative questioning, collecting good news stories, and envisioning dreams.
SEED SCALE[44]	SEED—Self Evaluation for Effective Decision-making. SCALE—Systems for Communities to Adapt Learning and Expand. This approach argues that human energy is "the essential commodity that will improve lives, individuals are shown to already possess an infinite resource they can build on." This approach reduces the need for outside resources including research money, skilled laborers, and even government effectiveness, with the belief that the community already has the capacity to solve its own problems through its human capital.
Logical Framework Approach	This linear approach includes analyzing and planning a project in a detailed and orderly fashion to uncover the root issues and discover if the project design will effect root change.

The Challenge for Church-Led Missions

In November of 2012, the World Bank released a policy research report that resulted from an in-depth review of about 500 studies. The report, *When do Participatory Development Projects Work*, discussed three main lessons learned from the challenges of participatory development projects. Those lessons were:

1. Induced participatory interventions work best when they are supported by a responsive state.
2. Context, both local and national, is extremely important. Outcomes from interventions are highly variable across communities; local inequality, history, geography, the nature of social interactions, networks and political systems all have a strong influence. The variability of these contexts is sometimes so large, and their effect so unpredictable, that projects that function well usually do so because they have strong built-in systems of learning and great sensitivity and adaptability to variations in context.
3. Effective civic engagement does not develop predictably. Instead, it is likely to proceed with fits and starts where long periods of seeming quietude are followed by intense, often turbulent change….[45]

In light of this information, the following challenges are faced by the Western Church in missions:

1. She must both be a "responsive state" and seek to work with other "responsive states" as she moves forward. She should not be doing missions with local churches or communities *that do not want her there*. She needs to make sure she is truly welcome to be where she is. This only

comes from listening intently to what international brothers and sisters are saying, and asking the tough questions when they are silent in speaking their minds.
2. Is she taking into serious consideration the contexts she is working in? Is she being sensitive, adaptable, and teachable? Or is she offering a project she thinks a community wants or needs when it has never told her its opinion? Is she building in systems of learning or is she just mass-producing what worked in one context assuming it will work in another?
3. Is she forcing missions to accomplish what she predetermined they should accomplish, or is she flexible when things do not happen or develop as predicted? Is she okay with failure of what her supposed outcomes would be, or does she shun failed trips and blame it on a lack of local infrastructure? Is she honest about her mistakes, and is she taking steps to better herself?

The conclusion of the above-cited World Bank article says:

> Most important, there needs to be room for honest feedback to facilitate learning, instead of a tendency to rush to judgment coupled with a fear of failure. The complexity of participatory development requires a high tolerance for failure and clear incentives for project managers to report evidence of it. Failure is sometimes the best way to learn about what works. Only in an environment in which failure is tolerated can innovation take place and evidence-based policy decisions be made.[46]

Is the Western Church honest about what she is doing on foreign soil? Does she fear failure and therefore, tell herself that attempting participatory missions would be too sticky? The Good News seems to only get good when it gets messy. That God was willing to step down into humanity and dwell among human beings demonstrates that He is a God unafraid of messes.

Corbett and Fikkert define poverty alleviation as "the ministry of reconciliation: moving people closer to glorifying God by living in right relationship with God, with self, with others, and with the rest of creation."[47] Right relationship is not a dictatorship nor is it a puppet and a puppeteer. In John 15:15 (ESV), Christ tells his disciples, "No longer do I call you servants…but I have called you friends." Developing relationships is development work. Participatory development helps the missionary shift from master-servant work—which he has no business doing in the first place—to friendship-partnership work—which is sustainable, dignifying, and ultimately the biblical call for every Christian.

Justice is a higher standard than charity, but in the end, the missionary serves a just God who calls him to bring justice—not charity—to the ends of the earth.

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[1] Please note that within this research, Western and American are used interchangeably; likewise, Christian and missionary are also used as synonyms.

[2] Associated Press, *Newtown inundated with gifts, money,* USA Today.

[3] Christian, *God of the Empty-Handed*, 6

[4] Ibid.

[5] This information was sought out through the use of biblegateway.com and hebrew4christians.com and does not include Bible paraphrases, only translations.

[6] Keller, *Generous Justice*, 10.

[7] Wilson, *Old Testament Words*, 236.

[8] Etymology Dictionary

[9] Myers, *Walking With the Poor*, 66.

[10] Ibid, 116.

[11] Corbett and Fikkert, *When Helping Hurts*, 157.

[12] Oliver, *Why I Stopped Serving the Poor*, 2.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Andrews, "Heart of Christianity."

[15] Thomas, A Smoldering Wick, 3.

[16] Micah Challenge, Live Justly, 6.

[17] Parsons, *Hebrew Glossary Online*, used with permission.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Wolterstorff, *Theology of Justice*. The Justice Conference 2013. https://vimeo.com/60859538

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Steinberg, *The Monster and Monterrey*.

[23] WNYC, *Mexico's Drug War Hits Monterrey*.

[24] Raleigh, *18 Murdered Near Potrero*.

[25] King Jr., *Strength to Love*, 38.

[26] Ibid., 40.

[27] Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 44.

[28] Wallis, J. *America's Original Sin*, 23.

[29] Linthicum, *Transforming Power*, 36-37.

[30] Wolterstorff, *Until Justice and Peace Embrace*, 71.

[31] Myers, *Walking With the Poor*, 127.

[32] Ondrik, Participatory Approaches to National Development Planning.

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[45] World Bank. *When do Participatory Development Projects Work?*

[46] Ibid.

[47] Corbett and Fikkert. *When Helping Hurts*, 74.