

The personal side of poverty

Recently I visited HIV/AIDS patients at the general hospital in Equatorial Guinea. I met a young man and his mother who sat on his hospital bed. There was another patient in the room, a Cameroonian man who was unresponsive. It was obvious he was dying in front of this young man and his mother.

After praying for everyone in the room, I left with my heart in my stomach. Dying in a foreign country with no family by your bedside would be a nightmare in itself. What's worse is that the hospital doesn't even provide needed medicine. In the West anti-retroviral drugs would probably have kept this man alive.

In my experience compassion quickly turns to shell-shock when faced with the deep injustices upon which this suffering is built. Many conscious decisions were made all over the world that led to this man dying alone and in pain. I want to scream, "It's not fair!"

Living in the midst of poverty is not easy. It is not fun. I don't feel noble. It is very confusing. Imagine the proverbial homeless guy downtown asking you for money. What do you do? What do you do if it happens all the time? What do you do if you actually know the guy? What if the guy goes to your church? What do you do if the books on the subject tell you to be careful not to create "dependence," but Jesus tells you to have compassion? Where do you draw the line?



And talk about existential issues. Thoughts such as, "If I were born in Equatorial Guinea instead of..." can keep you up all night! That is, if the witch doctors aren't already keeping you up. But that's another story.

Jason and his wife Lisa, along with their son, Kenyon, taught national believers while serving in Equatorial Guinea. They have recently returned home for health reasons.



Jason and Lisa

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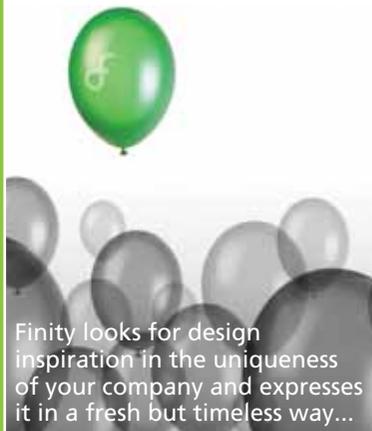
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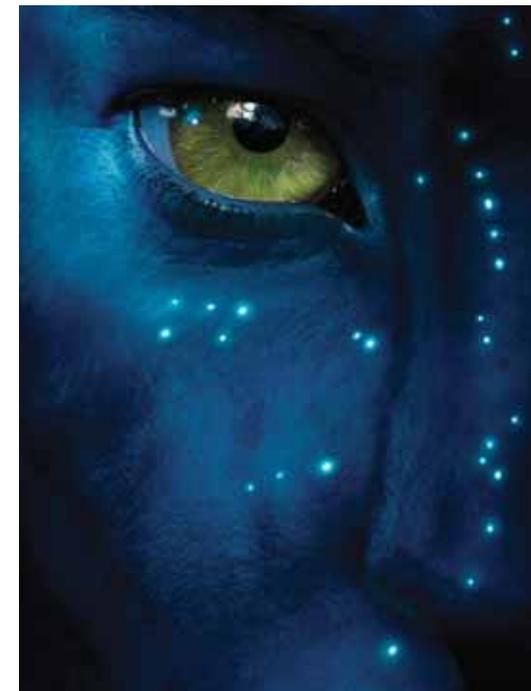
Avatar and Motives for Mission

"We've built them a hospital, taught them English, given them medicine... what more do they want?" The line in the movie *Avatar* goes something like that. If you've seen it recently you may have been struck by how possible it is for evil motives to fire social action. "We'll do XYZ so that we can get what we want." In *Avatar* it was access and possession of a precious mineral. In mission life it could be acceptance and trust in a community in order to be able to preach and find receptivity to the gospel. Our modern sensibilities writhe at such instrumental rationales.

Social Action – our motives, emphasis, practice are all hotly debated in mission circles. At one extreme we focus on the physical, confident that our motives are pure because we care for people, for their good, not because we want to plant a church among them. But does this distinguish us in any way from our world's secular and unspiritual position? What about our social responsibility for people's souls? Are we just helping people on a more comfortable road to hell?

On the other extreme we focus almost exclusively on the spiritual. This world and people will come to an end anyway. We're confident our motives are pure because we care for the eternal destiny of people not just their temporary now. But are we biblical? What about the multitude of commands to care for the widow, the poor, the thirsty?

WEC's core objectives are to train and send people to evangelise and plant churches among the remaining unreached people on the earth. This calls for the sharing of the gospel of Jesus Christ in all its fullness. It seems to us that social action is a fundamental component in the presentation of Christ. But how WEC individuals and teams express social action is diverse. Wouldn't it be fascinating to hear what a variety of missionaries think? We decided to ask them. See the Feature Article inside for their thoughts.



▼ inside

• WEC and Social Action • Love Lived Loudly! • WEC Practitioners Speak • The Personal Side of Poverty

WEC and Social Action

After looking at our website, several enquirers over recent months felt there was no “natural fit” for them in WEC. It turns out however, that these people were a good fit, but got the wrong impression through a curious omission.

They were passionate about pioneer church-planting, but sadly found no clear explanation of how WEC responds to the physical, social or economic needs of people, as well as the spiritual. Obviously, having such a strong emphasis on church planting has led some to question the place of compassion and community development ministries in WEC. So here we go...

We believe that a healthy and biblical church will naturally seek to meet its community's needs. In this sense, intentionally holistic church planting is one of, if not the best way to see communities transformed.

On the other hand, we are also vitally involved in caring for children in crisis, literacy and developmental projects, drug rehabilitation, medical, vocational and agricultural ministries to name a few. So why does a church-planting focused mission do all this?

The simple answer is, there is no alternative – if we follow Christ to the unreached frontiers, we have to share and practice the whole gospel. More than any agenda, methodology or calling, our basic motivation seeks to reflect the heart of God and the holistic life and ministry of Jesus. He touched the whole person - mind, body and spirit. He also spoke about corporate structures and attitudes that needed to be redeemed. The gospel is always to be presented in such a way that it is seen as good news, not just for the individual but for the whole community.

This ‘whole gospel’ conversation is nothing new. The Lausanne Covenant (Switzerland, 1974) became a milestone in evangelical history, confidently proclaiming the continued need for evangelism and social responsibility. The Covenant (www.Lausanne.org/covenant) won agreement from Christians of all stripes, and included the memorable phrase, “Evangelisation requires

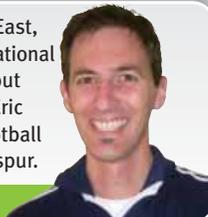


the whole church to take the whole gospel to the whole world.” Christopher Wright, chair of the Lausanne Theology Working Group for this year’s October congress in South Africa writes, “The whole gospel means all the blessings of the gospel. We must give full weight to all the dimensions of sin and evil that the Bible in both testaments portrays. And we must proclaim the glories of God’s redemption as his victory over evil in all its dimensions.” WEC agrees with Wright that, “As gospel people we must believe, live and communicate all that makes the gospel staggeringly comprehensive good news.”

Since its earliest days then, “demonstrating the compassion of Christ” has been an integral part of WEC’s church planting focus and values. Many of our teams need more people who can harmonise church planting and social action. Care to talk this through? Now I’m off to update our website...

Forever changed by the Middle East, Eric (and Adaire) now serve as National Mobilisers. When not hanging out with his 3 gorgeous daughters Eric loves to run, read and follow football in the colours of Tottenham Hotspur.

Eric



Love Lived Loudly!

My greatest memories of my mother are her strong work ethic, and her passion for the poor, the suffering and the women of the young Liberian church.

As the Liberian church grew, Mum became distressed by the lack of teaching offered to women. Although whole families attended special conferences, women were expected to mind children and prepare meals. Realizing that she could not change cultural expectations, Mum pleaded for a training centre for women. She argued that a spiritually strong church could not survive without spiritually-strong women.

With church and mission backing, construction soon began on a small centre that could host up to 30 students. Women could come for periods of two weeks on a rotating basis. The rules were clear: women must be selected by their district leaders and must come without their children. The objectives were also clear: to provide sound teaching of Scripture; to introduce hygiene and

medical care; to teach basic literacy skills; and to instruct the women on how to present a “modern-style meal” so that educated children who return to their villages would be proud of their progressive parents.

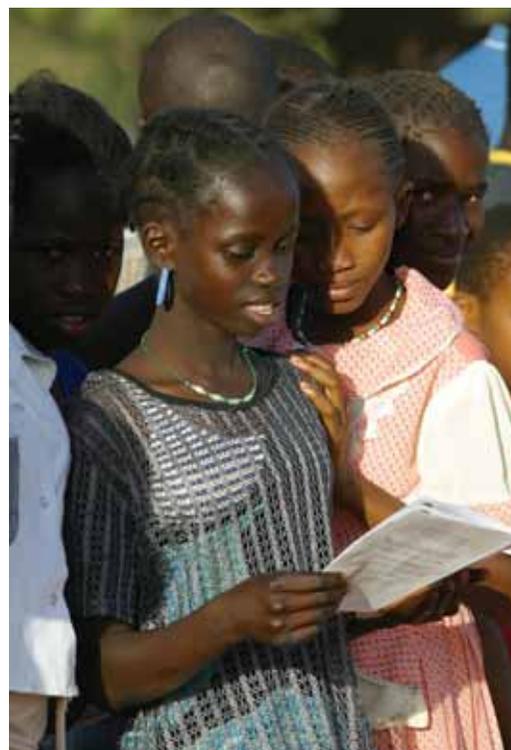
The success of the program soon became apparent as the status of women rose both in the community and the church. Throughout nearly 25 years of civil war this centre for training and educating women is one of the few programs maintained by the church, and still operating today.

WEC believes that the model of holistic ministry into which God has led us is one in which evangelism, the church, church planting and compassionate ministries are always closely linked. Compassionate ministries are both a bridge to relationships and a partner of evangelism. Every act of compassion has evangelistic implications, and every evangelistic act has social results. Not only did the Liberian women take their new insight into rural health back to their communities, but they also effectively and boldly presented the gospel.

My mother’s experience in Liberia demonstrates the importance of working with the church to provide social care, education and empowerment for women of the church. A strong socially-integrated church is a powerful force for the Kingdom. In spite of the horrors and devastation of war, the United Liberia Inland Church remains strong. Part of this strength lies in the women of the church – socially active and spiritually empowered. And all this, because my mother’s life spoke every bit as loudly as her clear verbal testimony of Jesus.

Henry (and Nancy) grew up in Africa. After 15 years in the Middle East they now serve as Directors of WEC Canada - and have four rugby crazed kids!

Henry



I think, therefore I do...

Whether it's running schools, medical clinics, sustainable farming, developing literacy programmes, providing relief and development or cattle for those who have lost all they had, WEC teams are sharing Christ's love around the world. It is tough and often thankless, but so relevant and necessary. Some of the workers involved are highly trained professionals, others with hearts full of love do what they can – just like Mary did for Jesus (Mark 14:6-8).

Here's a random mix of just some of what WECers think and do...

David and Sue are now based in the UK having served previously in Ghana

"Our focus in Ghana was evangelism and church planting amongst the Konkomba people, who were wide open to the Gospel. However we found that the social projects were an integral part of the ministry. If you work amongst the poor and needy you cannot ignore their physical needs. We found ourselves involved practically in lots of small ways. One Muslim woman came back to thank us for some medical help and said that when she had needs the Muslims hadn't helped her and it was only we, the Christians who cared about her. Surely this is what the Gospel is about."



Phyllis Kilbourn is founder of WEC's "Rainbows of Hope" ministry to children in crisis, now operating in over 10 countries.

"Although WEC has traditionally been a church-planting mission, the heart of WEC's core value of compassion can be likened to an old song which proclaims 'Love and marriage go together like a horse and carriage.' Today, more than ever, compassionate ministry and worldwide evangelisation must go together." See www.rainbowsofhope.org for more.

Adrian and his family serve in Asia primarily through radio ministry

"We've been doing some hospital visitation as a team and independently. In one case after doctors had done everything they could to no avail, a woman was finally delivered of severe pain as a result of prayer. She was the first family member of a local believer to come to faith. Whenever money is involved things do get complicated and can lead to dependence. Nevertheless we have helped raise money for various people to have surgeries they could not otherwise have had. We've made our share of mistakes that's for sure, but we try to be discerning and want to show the believers (who usually have no resources) that we are a family who naturally help and care for each other. We're very encouraged to see believers of the other major ethnic group here get involved and take responsibility for some of the financial needs.

"Betel" is a WEC ministry among substance abusers and marginalised, now in over 60 urban areas in 13 nations.

"Betel began in Madrid, Spain, two decades ago when a small group of WEC International missionaries began to care for the needs of a few drug addicts and marginalized people. What began as a spontaneous response to a pressing social need in one local neighbourhood has developed into a coherent, practical and proven program that has brought deliverance to thousands of individuals from many cultures who have struggled with substance abuse and addiction." The work in Spain recently received the 2009 Daikonia Award for the Most Significant Social Work in Spain. The Minister of Immigration personally thanked the Betel Director for their open heart and practical help extended towards addicts, immigrants and marginalized people, some of whom had lost their jobs and homes in the present economic crisis. See www.betel.org for more.

Geoff and Heather are Kiwi missionaries reaching out to North African Muslim migrants in the UK.

"We teach English because it's what people want and need. We feel saddened that they cannot integrate into society because of language difficulties, and want them to know that we aren't as scary and weird as they might otherwise believe. We also teach the Bible and English, trusting that in the process they see Jesus in us, want to understand why we do what we do, and get drawn to him as he promised (John 12:32). Jesus commands us to love our neighbours and our enemies. He came down to our level to show us how much he loves us. We long for people who've never heard that message to have the chance to hear it in a non-confrontational way."

Michael and his family are currently seconded to an aid-agency in Central Asia.

"In today's world people are looking for authenticity and this is both refreshing and challenging. Scandals have rocked the church and broken the confidence of many in and outside the church. When looking for authenticity people want to see a truly integrated Christian - one whose words and ideas are consistent with actions that demonstrate the sacrificial, compassionate love of God. At the same time, actions which may radiate kindness but with no mention of the Saviour fail to point anyone in the right direction or give credit to the giver of life. Ministry, under whatever banner we want to put it (church planting, mercy ministries, discipleship etc) must be integrated, whole life and for the sake of the Gospel, authentic!"



Jerry and his family work are based in Central Asia

"It helps tremendously that we see what we do as part and parcel of the bringing in of Jesus' Kingdom. We believe it is a mistake to try and separate 'word and deed' and see God as perfectly able to bring in His Kingdom as we function in the organic unity of words and deeds done in the name of Jesus. We seek to build ownership for the projects with the local communities and to increase their capacity to deal with the problems they face."

Dr Gisela Schneider served in medical ministry in Gambia.

"One day as we sat in the little mud house belonging to 'Fatou's' grandfather, he told us that we could have his sick daughter, and her three children ages six, eight and ten. Perplexed and overwhelmed, I knew I could not take on such a responsibility myself. I called our church leaders who felt strongly that we should take up the challenge to care for both the mother and the children. 'Fatou's' mother had made a commitment to Christ, and the church was her family now... There are no easy answers to the HIV dilemma, but Immanuel means 'God with us' – even in the midst of a pandemic of unprecedented proportions. By his grace we can make a difference in the lives of people, communities and a suffering world."

SITsvacant

North Africa – Project Manager

Minimum period: 4 years

Description: Responsible to manage a team with a goal of Aid and Development. There are several projects that are in abeyance - a sewing class to teach skills to help people provide for their families, a literacy class and prison ministry where prisoners are taught skills that will help them upon release.

Qual's: Knowledge of French is essential.

Middle East – Medical Specialists

Minimum period: 2 years

Description: Physician (Internal medicine) - Paediatrician - Anaesthetist - Surgeon - Gynaecologist (female). Ours is a small rural hospital with modest facilities. We work in a government hospital and the specialist must be willing to work with limited means, and alongside national colleagues. The medical needs are enormous, but with commitment and flexibility a great deal can be achieved.

Qual's: Internationally recognized degree in the field of specialization.

Africa: Gambia – Agriculturalist, Expert in Natural Medicine, Teacher, Medical Personnel, Literacy Workers

Description: We need people, who want to reach and teach and disciple the local people with their profession in order to plant a church / community of believers.

Qual's: Examples of professions are: Agriculturalist - to run a tree nursery and promote new crops; expert in Natural Medicine - to apply and promote natural medicine in the tropics; teacher - (grades 1 - 9) in government schools; medical personnel to run a malnutrition centre, work with the government health team; literacy workers - to run literacy classes, promote and produce literature.

WEC is serving in a huge variety of church planting focused ministries and professions in over 70 countries. These are just a few random examples among numerous other possibilities. Visit www.wecnz.org and click on Opportunities to search out more. Better yet, pick up the phone, call 0800 GO INTO, and get the full picture.

More Info

NZoutlook

I've noticed lately that several marathon experts are blogging about the return of *barefoot running*. They see the benefits of taking off fancy shoes and letting our bare feet feel the road. My first thought was "Ouch! Wouldn't that hurt?" Apparently not as much as you might think. In fact, some say that because of the bare foot's unhindered contact with the road we naturally adjust our steps and posture to avoid pain and actually improve the effect running has on our whole body.

When the prophet Isaiah spoke of the messenger's "beautiful feet," and the apostle Paul encouraged Christians to have "feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace," they were not thinking of well fitted sandals. They were talking about ordinary, dusty rugged feet ready for action and service. Evangelism, social action, mission activity of all kinds requires that some of the followers of Jesus physically relocate to be among the needy.

Beyond "being there," this barefoot discussion reminds me that we can so easily clothe our expressions of the good news in all sorts of fancy padding. The best message is the one that comes from a sensitive messenger, one who is in touch with the social terrain. So how do we "go barefoot?" As the eyes of the barefoot runner constantly scan the road in front and tread carefully, the evangelist needs to observe and learn as much as possible about their communities, experiencing and sensing the *peoplescape* in order to communicate the good news *according to the situation*. More on that in the next GOinto.

Flavoured by a few years in the Middle East, Matthew and Andrea now serve as National Directors of WEC New Zealand. When not caught up in the adventures of their 3 sons they enjoy expertly crafted coffee and a thought-provoking read.

Matthew & Andrea



Book Review – We Dance Because We Cannot Fly



This is the incredible story of Betel – a Christian community that is healing thousands of lives broken by drug addiction.

A snapshot of one congregation is typical of others. The majority of arms raised during worship are heavily tattooed. Many of the wrists bear the scars of attempted suicides. There are few noses that have not been broken, few smiles that are not missing teeth. Three-quarters of the congregation have been addicted to heroin. Nearly every church member has spent at least one night in jail, if not a year or more.

Read it and you'll be struck by the sheer transformational power of God, and the way in which he grew an amazing worldwide community from humble beginnings. One person at a time. No road map. No great strategy or plan.

Order your copy from WEC NZ today, \$25.00 + p & p.

Palmy Trekker Amazed



Jo 'trekked' from Palmerston North to the WEC-associated Melusi Christian Community in South Africa. Melusi ministries include caring for the homeless, HIV/ AIDS care, food distribution, outreaches and a kids club. The excerpt below comes from an email four months into Jo's six month stay...

"I'm starting to see the good stuff that gets done here. Just after I got here we met a lady as part of an outreach. She was incredibly weak that first time. Probably a mixture of HIV, and maybe asthma, or something like that. She could barely walk, had not had much food, and her approximately 11 year old son came and asked for help. We took some food over, and she cried as she was so thankful for a bit of help."

"After about three months of us taking food to her, she was strong enough to walk to the hospital. That's about 2km, in the sun, by herself there and back! It's incredible what a little bit of food and prayer can do. And it's awesome to know that I could be a part of it."

WEC Trek is the short-term missions arm of WEC NZ. To find out more see: www.wecnz.org

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- Date: 20 - 23 April 2010
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