




The Missiological basis of Evangelism in Disadvantaged Communities¹ and the Pivotal Role of the Church

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Abstract

The mission of the Triune God—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—is the focus of this paper since the *missio Dei* perspective is essential to every section. To bring people from all tribes, nations, kingdoms, and languages together in eternal worship of Him, the Father sent the Son, and the Son sent the Holy Spirit. Churches and communities must partake in the mission of God in the world because the gospel of Jesus Christ must be preached. God uses the church as his instrument to proclaim his kingdom to people from all walks of life. Thus, followers of Jesus Christ who engage in the *missio Dei*—bring love, hope, and peace to a broken and lost world— and should be true to God's calling. God chose people to establish his kingdom and bestows blessings upon them so that they may bless every nation on the earth. God's humanity and God's entire creation are ultimately reconciled and healed by the kingdom. Through Jesus Christ, people can receive the Good News of God through the work of the Holy Spirit. This paper comes from a chapter in a larger PhD study in Missiology².

Keywords: *missio Dei*; evangelism; disadvantaged communities; church; triune God.

Introduction

Reformed theology of the Reformation contains the theological roots of *missio Dei* and has a long history (Cilliers, 2021; Arthur, 2013; Bosch, 1991:8). Aurelius Augustine first used the Latin term *missio Dei*, which means "sentient acts," to refer to the actions of the Triune God early in the fourth century. Since then, *missio Dei* became a vital term in Catholic and Orthodox dogmatics (Keet, 2023; Buys & Jansen, 2015:228). "*Missio*" as an activity of God was also articulated by the theologian, Karl Barth (Dames, 2007:41). Barth's influence was critical for missionary theology. The WCC Missions Conference in Willingen of the IMC in 1952 adopted the term and it became popular in Protestant missions' theology through George Vicedom's book, *Missio Dei* in 1958 (Buys & Jansen, 2015:228). Furthermore, mission was understood as the very nature of God (Bosch, 2009:390), and the doctrine on the *missio Dei*, as God the Father sending Jesus Christ the Son, and God the Father and the Son sending the Holy Spirit (Arthur, 2013; Buys & Jansen, 2015:228; cf. also Is 6:8 Jn 20:21).

In reference to John 20:21, where Christ sent the apostles to plant churches (Ac 13:1–2; cf. also Jansen, 2015:21), De Jong (1996) asserts that mission is not only *missio Dei* but also *missio Christi*. With the intention of blessing them, God redeems the nations and makes peace with them through a covenant relationship (Jansen, 2015:19). According to Niemandt (2016), mission is an expansion and amplification of God. Consequently, it is a divine act. According to Bosch (2009:519 and De Beer (2012:5), God is thus the Great Missionary. The aim of *missio*

¹ Disadvantaged communities in this paper are also associated with poverty and the poor.

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Dei is for God to be all things to all people (1 Cor 15:28).

The Holy Spirit works through the church in collaboration with the community to reach out to and develop it. This is how it turns into a Christian neighborhood. God uses churches that employ members of the community to help them become believers filled with the Spirit while the churches carry out their mission. However, the kingdom of God is broader than the church, even though the church is central in this process – God does not operate without the church. The significance of the church is that it integrates the whole community. This can be explained by the image of a river that runs into the Dead Sea, which becomes alive. Ezekiel 47 presents the image of where the church grows as water flows. In the same way, the influence of the church in the community flows and thus the Church of Christ grows.

Jesus employs the following metaphor in John 7:37–39: He declared loudly on the final and most significant day of the festival, "Whoever is thirsty should come to me, and whoever believes in me should drink." "Streams of life-giving water will pour out of His side," the scripture states. This is what Jesus said regarding the Spirit that would be given to those who believed in Him. Because Jesus had not yet been raised to glory, the Spirit had not yet been given at that time.

From the foregoing, it is evident that the church and the community have a close relationship in which the church influences the community. The church is the body of Christ, which means that not all people in a community are Christians and belong to this body. Therefore, the church co-operates with the community to enrich the lives of non-Christians, to transform broken relationships and attract people to become Christians. This is the core principle of understanding the *missio Dei*, and both images are perspectives of a basic theory for holistic mission.

Background and scriptural perspectives for a holistic *missio-Dei* vision in missions

Both missiology and theology have grown increasingly complex as a result of the emergence of post-modern paradigms (Bosch, 2009:262-276; Hirsch, 2006:16). To be a part of the *missio Dei* and operate as a missional church (*missio ecclesia*), members of a community must develop a missional spirituality and live in a state of fear of God (Acts 9:31). Basic themes that serve as the impetus for participation in the *missio Dei* are God's honor and his praise (Jansen, 2015:21). In this context, churches should honor God, even if they are poor or disadvantaged. The reason is that they do not belong to themselves, or even to others, but to God. Therefore, if churches partake in the *missio Dei* with the aim to honor and respect God as churches, they become part of God's blessing to the world. Should God's people honor God in their words and deeds, God's honor will become vivid and visible, and above it all, they will grow in holiness (Ephesians 5:27). If churches turn back to the Scriptures, and adhere to the biblical principles of God, they will gain perspective on ways to take part in the *missio Dei*, and thereby fulfil their calling. Hence, biblical principles can remove barriers that frequently stand in the way of people's spiritual growth.

Churches and the mission of God (Matthew 28:18-20)

If churches participate in *missio Dei*, they stand for God's global mission. Nonetheless, it is critical that churches recognize that God is the one who is concerned with mission. Mission will become a part of believers' work and existence if they participate in the *missio Dei*. It is crucial for the author that churches should understand the concept "*missio*" from a Trinitarian perspective, which is God the Father who sent Jesus Christ His Son, and God the Father and Jesus Christ the Son who sent the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:18-20; Galatians 4:4; 1 Peter 1:12; 1 John 4:9). In this context, the Triune God sends the church to partake in his mission, and to recognize Jesus as their Lord and Savior since He delivers transformation.



Churches as co-workers of God (Romans 10:14-15; 2 Corinthians 6:1)

Churches are both fellow workers and collaborators with God in his mission. This indicates that it is not appropriate for Christians to accept God's grace in vain (2 Corinthians 6:1; De Beer, 2012:62). To become well-equipped as followers of Jesus Christ, spirit-filled churches ought to develop in both faith and wisdom. As members of a church, believers must build and support one another with their gifts and service they received from God (Acts 2:38; 1 Corinthians 12:11; Ja 1:17). Receiving the gifts of God, will ensure that members of a church become equipped and trained to partake in the *missio Dei*, and bring God's message of good news and reconciliation to a lost and broken world.

The church and the care of God (John 17:11-24; Ephesians 4:7; 12-16; John 13:34-35)

God cares for his people, as He promised, and the church is His covenant people (Matthew 28:20; cf. De Beer, 2012:62). Consequently, if the churches fully embrace the *missio Dei*, they can rely on God to provide for their needs and take care of them (Matthew 28:20; 1 Peter 5:7).

The church and the kingdom of God (Colossians 3:1-4)

God blessed those whom he chose to establish his kingdom so that they might bless all the nations of the world. When it comes to the *missio Dei*, churches ought to center their efforts around Jesus Christ (De Beer, 2012:63). It is important in this paper to understand the reason why Jesus came to earth. It was to announce the good news, which is the Gospel of the kingdom, and its purpose. The primary purpose of the kingdom is that people should acknowledge the kingship, the rule of God, over all of creation. Healing and reconciliation are the gifts of God resulting from the rule of God and not the purpose of ministry. Otherwise, people would want to receive God's gifts without seeking his rule. Significantly, the kingdom of God is a process that cannot be halted (Corbett & Fikkert, 2012:46).

The mission of Jesus Christ, who preached the good news of the kingdom by word and deed, serves as the foundation for the work of God's people in the various churches. As a result, the church ought to imitate their Lord. The church serves as God's vehicle for announcing his kingdom in all spheres of existence in addition to being the fruit and symbol of the kingdom. Churches must therefore participate in the *missio Dei*, be true to God's calling, and follow Jesus Christ.

The author underwrites the argument of Corbett and Fikkert (2012:37) that prosperity, growth, and progress of any church has no purpose. Only love for the Gospel carries weight. Hence, churches are obligated to bring love, hope and peace to a lost and broken world. Furthermore, churches should focus continually on building the kingdom of God and leading people to Christ. Should churches wish to be part of the *missio Dei*, they should abide by the prerequisites of the kingdom. One of these is submitting to the King, Jesus Christ Himself (Corbett & Fikkert, 2012:37).

The Luke-Acts perspective on mission and evangelism

The mission and evangelism perspective found in Luke and Acts is crucial, and these two books of the Bible belong together because they describe Jesus' earthly ministry and mission (De Beer 2012:38). In a practical sense, these books introduce Christ to the world and tell the story of Jesus and salvation. The best understanding of mission in the biblical evidence is offered by the Luke-Acts perspective.

According to the book of Luke, Jesus is both the One who is sent and the One who sends others (De Beer, 2012:38). The evidence for mission and evangelism in Luke and Acts is



unambiguous. According to Bosch (2009:84), Luke's perspective has gained significant traction in the discussion concerning a scriptural basis for missionary work. It is critical to comprehend the significance of Jesus Christ's mission: according to Luke 9:1-6, 10:1-6, and 24:46-48, the sent One is also the One who is sending. The Gospel of John also makes a strong case for this significance (John 20:20; 21-23; 25-29; 31).

Luke's work revolves around the central theme of "salvation," as explained by Bosch (2009:84). De Beer (2012:38) elaborates on this point by pointing out that the terms *soteria* and *soterion*, which translate to "salvation," occur six times in Luke and Acts and once in the book of John. They do not appear once in Mark or Matthew. The word *soteria* has a significant meaning of *redeem, recover, or purchase back* (De Beer, 2012:38; cf. also Leviticus 25:26, 32; Ruth 4:4, 6; Exodus 6:6; Psalms 77:14). Bosch (2009:84) is explicit in his research about the meaning of salvation. In this regard, salvation has a dual dimension: liberation from all bondages and entry into a new life in Christ. The author concurs with this holistic meaning, considering the biblical testimony that there is only new life in Jesus Christ, and the old things such as sin, habits, conduct, behavior, mindsets, and lifestyles have passed (2 Corinthians 5:17).

It is vital to go into further detail on this subject because the idea of salvation is essential to the current investigation. In the Old Testament, the term for "salvation" is *yêsa*. The basic meaning is "bring into a spacious environment (Ps 18:36; 66:12). The word also carries a metaphorical sense of "freedom" from limitation, with the connotation of deliverance from factors which constrain such as disease (Isaiah 38:20), trouble (Jeremiah 30:7) or enemies (2 Samuel 3:18; Psalms 44:7). It is important to note that the usage of this word is synonymous with *yêsa* in the latter part of Isaiah (41:14; 44:6; 47:4).

The word "salvation" appears only once in the New Testament, and that only once in the synoptic Gospels. In Luke 19:9, Jesus describes himself as the embodiment of salvation, pardoning Zacchaeus. The term "save" was also used by the Lord to express his purpose for coming to earth (Mark 3:4), which he accomplished through direct declaration (Luke 4:18; Matthew 18:11; Luke 9:56; Matthew 20:28). Second, in Mark 8:35; Luke 7:50; 8:12; 13:24; Matthew 10:22, Jesus outlined what is expected of people. According to Luke 18:26, to be saved, one must have a contrite heart, exhibit helplessness that is childlike and receptive, and give up everything for Christ (Walters & Milne, 1996:1046-1050). The Lukian version of the verb "salvation", according to Witherington (1998:829), refers to healing since for Luke this is an essential part of Christian salvation. Witherington adds that salvation in the book of Luke also has the meaning of *rescue or deliverance and protection* from harm (Acts 7:25; 27:10). Salvation also entails a benefit based on God's gracious act of forgiving sins through Jesus (Witherington, 1998:837). Important for the present study, Luke's version of *salvation* is universal, in the sense that it includes both Jews and gentiles, which signify that all humankind must see the salvation of God in Jesus (Witherington, 1998:840; cf. Luke 3:6).

In addition, one should interpret the word "salvation" in the Gospel of Luke considering the Gospel's overall theme, which is Jesus. Beginning and ending, Luke portrays Jesus as the Messiah and Savior.

It is in Luke that the emphasis on salvation is greatest among the four New Testament Gospels (Scott, 2014). Through Jesus' words and deeds on the cross, salvation is also possible. Because of this, people cannot turn down Jesus' offer of salvation. Most importantly, Jesus' divinity is explicitly confirmed in the book of Luke. The fact that God is the source of salvation, and that Jesus is the only Savior should therefore be remembered, regardless of how it is expressed (Is 43:11). Scripture makes it abundantly evident that Jesus Christ's salvation was intended for everyone, not just Jews (De Beer, 2012:39).

Luke's particular interest in the social outcasts of society is clear from the foregoing. The



Gospel of Luke emphasizes forgiveness and empathy for the underprivileged (Bosch, 2009:84–117). According to Bosch, Luke has a special interest in economic justice when he writes about the relationship between the rich and the poor (De Beer, 2012:39; see also Luke 4:18-19). Luke is encouraging the wealthy to support the underprivileged in this way. Here, the impoverished may be either Christian or non-Christian for the purposes of argument.

Preaching Jesus Christ's good news of peace is emphasized in Acts 10:36. But as of right now, the world is wracked by terrorism, war, hate crimes, poverty, and violence, to mention a few (De Beer, 2012:40). Therefore, it is imperative to understand that bringing about peace is central to Jesus Christ's mission. Since it is their calling, churches participate in the peace process (Mark 9:50; John 14:27; 20:19; Romans 10:15; 15:33; 1 Corinthians 7:15; Galatians 5:22; Ephesians 2:14; Philippians 4:7).

Considering the aforementioned, the Luke-Acts perspective presents a distinct picture of the *missio Dei*, suggesting that churches are essential to comprehensive missions.

Theological considerations of holistic mission and evangelism in a *missio Dei* perspective

The great plan and purpose of God, which was shattered by sin and evil, includes mission and evangelism to redeem the entire creation and create the new creation (Wright, 2012:1-6; cf. Ac 20:27). Given that both terms refer to the entirety of Christian ministry to the world outside of the church, most people use "mission" and "evangelism" interchangeably (Bosch, 2008:4). However, it should be realized that mission has a broader application than evangelism. This is because the former includes testimony of social justice, work of mercy, services of love, mission, and evangelism to the center (Wright, 2012). Evangelism is central in the process of transformation within the community. God is already at work in mission through his Spirit in every life, culture, and community. His Spirit leads in all truth, and convinces people of sin, iniquity, and future judgments (Booker & Ireland, 2003:1; cf. Jn 16:13). The Holy Spirit operates through the preaching of the Gospel and the Word of God in people's lives. In Ephesians 2:4-5, Paul explains that Jesus Christ brought hope while people were spiritually dead in their disobedience, and the Spirit brought them to life with Christ. It is because of God's grace and mercy that they have been saved.

The Gospel is the activity of God that forms the centrality of both God's mission and the church's mission (De Beer, 2012:55; cf. Wright, 2012:2). There are five markers of mission, namely (1) proclaim the good news of the kingdom; (2) teach, baptize, and nurture new believers; (3) respond to human need by loving service; (4) seek to transform unjust structures of society; and (5) strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain the life of the earth (Wright, 2012:3). These five markers are interconnected, such as the rim of a wheel, which is united by its hub. In the same sense, the Lordship of Christ reigns over all aspects of life and mission. These five markers could also be summarized in several key words: evangelism, teaching, compassion, justice, and care of creation.

In the context of this paper, evangelism refers to "gospelling" the good news that God has promised and accomplished through Jesus Christ. Proclaiming the good news that the God who created the world has acted to save it from the consequences of human sin and evil, this involves telling the entire story of what God has done using the Old and New Testaments. This salvation was brought about through His Son, Jesus Christ (Booker & Ireland, 2003:2). People respond to this good news of God's salvation through Jesus Christ, by turning to Christ in repentance. In other words, evangelism forms the center of the fully integrated scope of all mission through Jesus Christ (Wright, 2012:6-7).

Moreover, the Greek word "evangelism" is the source of the English word *euaggelion*, which means "gospel" or "good news" in the noun form, and the word is also translated as "preach"



(Miano, s.a.). But in the verb form (*euaggelizesthai*) it means to “announce” or “bring good news” of Jesus who died for our sins (Baker illustrated Bible dictionary, 2013:534). This Greek word appears 55 times in the New Testament. Evangelism which entails the communication of the Gospel message, includes a warning, namely about sin and its consequences (John 16:8; Acts 24:25; Revelation 20:11-15). It also provides an explanation of God’s remedy for sin as conveyed by the Gospel (Acts 8:29-35; Romans 3:21-26; 2 Corinthians 5:21). This includes the clear call to repent or return from sin and turn toward God; and believe the Gospel by faith (Mark 1:15; Luke 13:1-5; Acts 17:29-31; Romans 1:17; 10:9-13). Based on the Markan version, evangelism points to a personal conversion (Barrett, 1987:9; DeMoss & Miller, 2002; Farrell, 1996). The whole church should be mission-driven and evangelizing since it exists for the sake of God’s mission, and mission is not a specialist activity for a few professionals (Wright, 2012:18). The risen Christ gave the Great Commission to all his disciples to proclaim the good news to the world (Barrett, 1987:20).

The mission of God in disadvantaged communities

Over the years, a thought-provoking question regarding underprivileged communities and the impoverished has been posed: "Have you ever done anything to help poor people?" (Fikkert & Corbett, 2012:9). These authors note that most missionaries and evangelicals would have responded negatively to this question. They also said that the church starts with the Bible to respond to the urgent spiritual needs that people have in today's world. Followers of Jesus Christ are compelled to have grace, show compassion and love for the poor and their physical needs (Corbett & Fikkert, 2012:11). The grace of God is the heartbeat of integral mission. Believers are obligated to convey God’s grace, generosity, by assisting the disadvantaged (Micah Declaration on integral Mission, 2001:2).

As demonstrated by Matthew 25:31–46, the church ought to take the initiative and collaborate with pertinent community stakeholders such as household heads, parents, business owners, etc. to address poverty, extend compassion to the impoverished, and support the disadvantaged (Isaiah 1:17). The Bible emphasizes that God calls us to care for the impoverished, and that we should share our material belongings with those who are in need for them to demonstrate God’s love (Corbett & Fikkert, 2012:13; Barram, 2011:558–560; see also 1 John 3:17).

These authors contend that no aspect of life can eliminate poverty on its own. Everybody owes it to God to assist the underprivileged. People who are poor and destitute require assistance in areas like spiritual development, agriculture, health, education, and economic development. Thus, to fulfill this biblical mandate, it is the duty of every Christian to assist the underprivileged (Barram, 2011:558-560; Corbett & Fikkert, 2012:14).

As the King of all kings and the Lord of all lords, Jesus Christ’s mission was and remains to proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God, which suggests that He deserves to be worshipped. All things are broken and defiled, implying that upon Jesus Christ’s return, the entire creation will be restored. Believers, including those who are impoverished, are already experiencing a taste of this, as they await His coming glory. Ailments, sorrow and unfreedom are turned around, and under his rule and authority and power, and are restored to health, beauty, and freedom (Corbett & Fikkert, 2012:32).

Jesus Christ is identified as the Creator, Sustainer, and Reconciler of all things in Colossians 1:5–20. He gave his life to make peace between all people, or to restore their standing or relationship with God. This is a portion of the good news, but the most exciting aspect is the assurance that everything will be restored. The church ought to do the same if Jesus Christ restored everything and shared the good news with the weak, the hurting, and the impoverished. They ought to be active in underprivileged areas, particularly with the impoverished (Corbett & Fikkert, 2012:37). Believers have been commanded to follow the



King, Jesus Christ, into places of brokenness, poverty, and injustice.

For churches that operate in impoverished areas, providing care for the impoverished should be their priority (Matthew 25:31-46; Acts 6:1-7; Galatians 2:1-10; 6:10; James 1:27; cf. Barram, 2011:558-560). According to Corbett and Fikkert (2012:41), during periods of comparatively equal economic conditions, the people of God in both the Old and New Testaments demonstrated genuine concern for the impoverished. They contend that this demonstrates God's will for all underprivileged communities, not just other churches today. Materially wealthy people have an obligation to share their goods with the less fortunate and to take care of the impoverished. It's not a complete answer, but it is a tangible demonstration of God's love for the underprivileged.

The goal of the church, which serves as a symbol of God's dominion on earth, is to live as Jesus did and to continue doing through his followers. This is done to declare and tangibly show that Jesus Christ is the King of kings and the Lord of lords through both word and deed. The only one bringing justice, righteousness, and peace is Him. As a result, those who proclaim his kingship among the blind, lame, sick, outcasts, and impoverished should emulate how Jesus lived (Corbett & Fikkert, 2012:41).

As He promised the kingdom to those who love Him, God has chosen those who are impoverished in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith (James 2:5). Moreover, "God humiliated the wise by choosing that which appears foolish to the world." To put the powerful to shame, he opted for weakness in the world. To prevent anyone from boasting in front of Him, He chose the things that are despised and lowly as well as the things that are not (1 Corinthians 26–29).

God has purposefully chosen to work in the world from the weak people on the "outside" rather than the powerful people on the "inside." God also chooses the foolish, weak, and hated objects. The wealthy are not purer or sanctified than the impoverished. The Bible's witness does not view materialism or poverty as desirable states or as wicked. One views wealth as a gift from God since it is the opposite of poverty which is also a gift from God as it gives spiritual strength. It is important to remember that God, in his infinite wisdom, decided to make his kingdom known in a "certain place"—among the impoverished, the weak, the lowly, the foolish, and the despised—where the arrogant world would never anticipate it (Corbett & Fikkert, 2012:42).

Families within the local church and even the government should minister to the impoverished in the same way that evangelicals and missionaries do. Given that they also bear significant responsibility for the impoverished in underprivileged communities, they ought to attend to the spiritual and material needs of the underprivileged. Taking care of the impoverished is not just the church's responsibility; rather, it is a crucial one that needs to be carried out in collaboration with other influential members of society (Corbett & Fikkert, 2012:44; see also Matthew 25:31–46, 1 Timothy 5:8, Psalm 4:27, and Psalm 72).

Academics, researchers, educators, community workers, and others should all give this task their all. Whether through initiatives, programs, or direct assistance, they ought to provide for the material and spiritual needs of the underprivileged in underprivileged communities. The biblical evidence is unmistakable in Isaiah 61:1-3, where the prophet affirms that God has appointed him to bring good news to the impoverished, comfort the grieving, proclaim freedom for the captives and prisoners, and herald the year of the Lord's favor. This verse is not only meant for the prophet Isaiah's audience at the time, but for all people who are willing to participate in God's mission to churches that are impoverished. It is paramount to acknowledge Jesus Christ before others, otherwise He will also not acknowledge them before the Father, if they are ashamed, and do not acknowledge Him (Luke 12:8-9; Mark 8:38; Romans 1:16; 2 Timothy 1:8; 2 Peter 4:16; 1 John 2:28).



Poverty according to a biblical framework (Corbett & Fikkert, 2012:54)

To diagnose the "disease" of poverty, one must first consider the fundamental nature of reality, beginning with God, the Creator of heaven and earth. God manifests Himself as the three-unity and as a relational Being. Since humans are created in God's image, they are relational beings. God created each person with four fundamental relationships: with God, with oneself, with others, and with the rest of creation. These connections may be thought of as the foundation of existence. Humans experience the fullness of life when these relationships are healthy because they realize they are what God intended for them to be. Christians can have these relationships in place, but they can also live in a context where social injustice has become the overarching system around them and others.

Humans are social, psychological, spiritual, and physical beings. They will therefore approach and carry out their efforts to reduce poverty in a more comprehensive manner. Given that God, the Creator, is intimately involved in all of creation, they must interact with it in its entirety, including culture. Underprivileged areas are a part of the beautiful world that God made and continues to maintain. Poor communities have been introduced to Christ before and beyond his earthly ministry. Hebrews 1:3 states that the Lord has been at work in all of creation (including these communities) since the beginning of time and is continuing to support them via his potent Word (Corbett & Fikkert, 2012:57).

Therefore, those who work in underprivileged areas learn about and come to value God's active involvement in this setting over time. Entering these communities inspires awe and humility because everything that is seen bears the imprint of God. Still, presenting God to the community ought to be a major portion of the church's job description. It's possible that these people have no idea who God is. Encouraging them to recognize the blessings that God has bestowed upon them from the beginning of time is imperative. They ought to be guided in discovering both their calling and their unique set of skills and abilities.

The fundamental nature of poverty

Poverty, in the opinion of Myers (1999:4, 65–66), is more than just a state of not having enough money or access to food, shelter, water, or other necessities. It also refers to the absence of social networks, information, or skills. In addition to being a lack, poverty can also refer to a deficit in which a person does not have access to enough clean water, food, or shelter. Low income is linked to poverty, and those who live there often feel inferior to others. One of the main components of the brokenness that people with low incomes feel in their relationship with themselves is shame. Some of these individuals do not believe that God created them.

Relationships are a major factor in poverty, according to Corbett and Fikkert (2012:59). They contend that relationships that are unhappy, unsatisfactory, unjust, and not lasting lead to poverty in real life. These academics believe that the lack of shalom, or universal peace, in all its forms, characterizes these kinds of relationships (Myers, 1999:86). Still, it's critical to avoid dwelling solely on the worst-case scenarios in life. The explanation is that everything is held together and sustained by Jesus Christ and His potent word (Colossians 1:16–17). The earthly ministry of Jesus Christ focused on people who are in need, poor people, people who suffered. This provides good news for the poor as well as for the rich, the sick, or strangers, et cetera. Jesus Christ died for believers and non-believers, and His mercy and grace is for all men (Bosch, 1991:18; cf. Luke 4:18; Isaiah 61:1; 58:6).

The causes of poverty

According to Myers (1999:83–86), the following factors contribute to poverty:

- Physical: According to Maslow, humans have three basic needs: food, clean water,



and shelter. Poverty results from lacking valuable assets like money, land, and livestock.

- Social: Poverty has social roots that exacerbate its physical effects.
- Mental: There is a connection between the poor's mental health and some of the causes of poverty. Lack of technical information and knowledge is the root cause of poverty. Alcohol, drugs, illness, and inadequate nutrition are the causes of mental states.
- Mentality: Poverty can also manifest as a poverty of being in the mind and spirit; for instance, when people lie, they weaken themselves.

A skewed worldview and ignorance are the main causes of the day-to-day poverty in African cultures. To substantiate this claim: Development assistance groups frequently ignore the spiritual roots of poverty while charging large sums of money for protection charms. Scholars tend to downplay the influence of the afterlife, which is home to occurrences like witchcraft, ancestral and other spirits, and a dread of evil and demons. The cause of poverty is fundamentally spiritual. What causes injustice in human relationships? What stands between God and people? What works against life, against *shalom* (peace)? The root cause of deception, distortion and domination is *to miss the mark* (sin³). It should be realized that every aspect of human life, including the body, mind, will and the emotions, all of life and all the earth, has been distorted and damaged by sin. This has alienated men and women from God, themselves, others and from the environment. Therefore, since the fall of Adam and Eve, futility has been built into the universe and sin is a universal trait of humanity – rich and poor alike. Sin also penetrates people's cultures and societies, affecting their social, economic, and political systems. Poverty, unemployment, HIV/Aids, and its consequences are mere symptoms of total depravity (MCDC, 2007a:1; MCDC, 2007b:1; MCDC, 2008:1; MCDC, 2009:1). The suffering caused by these symptoms is experienced as consequences of personal sins, but sometimes people are victims of sins caused by others. Since the author recognized that the effects of sin were universal, he came to see community transformation as the opposite of sin and its effects, as well as the restoration of God's order in creation, which included God's intention for people to live as his image bearers in every area of their lives. The Gospel, which is shared with people by word and deed, is a powerful vehicle through which the transforming grace of the Holy Spirit operates. Individuals will become worshippers of God because of this metamorphosis, which will complete their humanity.

When missionary work is conducted under the assumption that there is complete depravity, it becomes clear that improving the socialization of individuals and impoverished communities requires much more than just making small changes to the environment or unleashing the potential of those in these groups. In community development, presumptions that only concentrate on surface-level change run the risk of not being all-encompassing, thorough, long-lasting, and sustainable. An unbiblical and limited understanding of the causes for people's problems will misdirect the church in its approach to community development. The church should avoid imposing a framework based on reductionist presuppositions foreign to the Scripture's message about the brokenness in communities and the lives of individuals. Such an approach can inevitably led to a disregard for and even the discarding of needs that do not fit into such a framework. This will ultimately hinder the possibility of real holistic, comprehensive, and long-lasting change. The correct, biblically sound presuppositions are outlined for example, in obedience to the commission of God, the church should integrate words as well as deeds of God's love in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit to all people crossing their way. The Gospel should be preached, and people should be urged to turn from their sins, put their faith in Christ, and experience eternal reconciliation with God. In the name

³ Both Hebrew (*chata* and *het*) and Greek (*hamartia*) has the meaning of *missing the mark, go wrong, to error, to fail, guilt, fault* (aiming for the wrong target or not hitting it at all) (*Baker illustrated Bible dictionary*, 2013:1546; cf. also Ex 34:9; Dt 9:18; Lv 4:2-31; Nm 15:30.)



of Christ, extend the goodness of God's kingdom on earth by doing acts of kindness and compassion. Christ himself provided this example. It says that the Holy Spirit is the first fruit and assurance of God's new creation, and that believers are being transformed into the likeness of Christ. Create churches that will serve as beacons of God's transforming grace by discipling new believers and offering a glimpse of God's future creation in an environment of camaraderie and mutual support. God commands the believers to clothe themselves with compassion. This is a calling to walk with the poor and suffering and convey the transforming grace of God through a quality spiritual life that allows them to serve their community, not as saviors, but as servants of Christ, the one, true Savior. Through Jesus Christ there is good news since there is a way to overcome sin toward transformation. However, the bad news is that this news is not accepted, seeing that people refuse, therefore they remain in chains of self-imposed limitations (Myers, 1999:88-90).

The true identity of the poor

Like everyone else, the impoverished are made in God's image. Consequently, empowering the impoverished to act as change agents within their own communities is a necessary part of treating them with dignity (Micah Declaration on Integral Mission, 2001:2). Myers (1999) takes a Christian stance when discussing poverty and human transformation. Because of the effects and nature of the Fall in the beginning (Genesis 3), every human being is impoverished because they do not experience the four fundamental relationships as God intended. Poverty is thus considered to be social, spiritual, and physical (Myers, 1999:64–65).

Every person suffers from a poverty of stewardship, community, spiritual intimacy, and being. According to Corbett and Fikkert (2012), all people are unable to fulfill their potential and find the complete joy that God intended for them in the context of the four fundamental relationships. People are a part of their families, communities, and social structures. They have the capacity to enter God's kingdom and are endowed with abilities, skills, and the image of God. The poor are also part of households, which are the building blocks of larger social systems. The poor are those who are always among others who are not poor. Others may be poor spiritually, not necessarily materially. They do not only attend certain, impoverished churches. In this regard, poverty and poor people can only be understood by keeping the relationships between the poor and the non-poor in mind (Myers, 1999:61-64).

Christian views of the poor

Myers (1999:4) asserts that believers' perspectives on the impoverished vary. "Made in the image of God" is a perspective that draws from the creation story to suggest that the reason behind their poverty is a deficiency of knowledge, opportunities, and skills. Individuals in revolt: this perspective is based on the Fall of humanity during the Creation. Therefore, a lack of initiative, laziness, and poor decisions are the causes of poverty. They, therefore, need to accept the Gospel, and make better life-choices. Christ incarnate – according to Matthew 25 where Christ places Himself in the distressing guise of the poor. A practical example would be Mother Teresa's ministry to the poor (Kelly, 2019). People lack love and relationships and do not belong, whereas they need accompaniment and should bare their suffering just as Christ. Gods blessed – based on the prophetic literature and the Exodus account. The poor are blessed, and the kingdom is meant for them. The reason for their poverty is that they are oppressed by social systems to keep them poor for the benefit of the non-poor. It is, therefore, vital that they receive justice and assistance in finding their voice and place in the economic and political system. The theory of "lost souls" makes selective allusions to the Gospels and asserts a distinction between the material and spiritual worlds of the present era. The poor need to be saved because the kingdom is coming, they are lost, and Jesus' second coming is quickly approaching. Love compels Christians to share and proclaim the gospel by demonstrating Christ's power over evil in all their words and deeds.



Who the poor are not

Contrary to popular belief, the impoverished are not inherently lazy, fatalistic, careless, or conceited. It's interesting to note that both wealthy and poor people experience these issues (Myers, 1999:64). God's concern for the impoverished is profound. Deuteronomy 15:11, which states that there will always be impoverished people in the land, encapsulates this worry. Consequently, I give you an order to show compassion and generosity to your fellow Israelites who are in need in your land (see also Baker Illustrated Bible Dictionary, 2013:1339). Pain is a necessary component of poverty, including the rich because those who experience it physically endure hardships such as lack of food to support their families and social humiliation. Being Christlike means that people also suffer because social status does not limit pain. Christians are called by the love of Christ to be a concrete blessing to others, the church should have compassion for underprivileged children and youth in their communities (Gallo, 2023; Baker illustrated Bible dictionary, 2013:1339; cf. also Job 29:12; 30:25; 31:16; Psalms 112:9; Peter 19:17; 22:9; 28:8, 27; Isaiah 58:5-7; Jeremiah 22:16).

Significant to the context of this paper, believers' care, compassion, help and outreach to poor, disadvantaged and the unprivileged (including children and youth) could be more credible if the aid of churches, government and societies were more than metaphors. Christian transformation should make God and His Son, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit part of the intervention, training, equipping, developing, and empowering of children and youth by God's Word.

The church's missional contribution

The church needs to answer God's call to mission. The author understands communities cannot afford to continue with the status quo when it comes to the impoverished and destitute. Christians need to get involved in the orphan crisis that is affecting Africa and other regions to provide these vulnerable children with hope (Singletary, 2011:103). Since Christians have a responsibility to help children who are struggling to survive, the church should learn to be more obedient to God's call. Youth ministry includes the important role of children in the church. However, at present that role tends to disintegrate into issues with children, and they become more vulnerable (Makant, 2012:4). Furthermore, there are young people who are not even involved in churches. The question is: What should be done? The complex answer is outreach through developments, interventions, i.e. youth camps, community programs, youth centers, workshops, training and equipping as well as education in mission. The church should embrace development on a psychological, social, and spiritual dimension concerning the youth (Going, 2011:50; Greener, 2016:161). Building quality leaders is essential to the church's expansion. God values the church because it is an institution that will be sustained by its youth. Churches, however, frequently fall short in helping young people grow because churches can't do everything that is out there to help young people due to limited funds, labour and/or priorities (Bergler, 2010:7; 21).

An unhealthy relationship with God is the cause of poverty. Most of all, and especially through his Word, God makes Himself known. Scripture (Isaiah 53:1–12; Matthew 4–4, Luke 17:30; Galatians 1:16; 1 Peter 1:23; Revelation 19:13) contains written and revealed information about God that helps people understand him.

There is a propensity to see mission as something that the church started and that missionaries themselves carry out (Messenger, 2004:27). But it's clear that mission comes from God because it's an act of God (De Beer, 2012:47). Christians in this setting have a duty to serve by word and deed, and to administer justice where injustice has occurred (Jansen, 2015:21; see also Keller, 2011:216–218). Since it emphasizes each person's role in God's mission, word and deeds are inextricably linked in the church's mission and constitute a crucial component of *missio Dei*. This unity points to a lifestyle that could fit into God's mission, and



functions to the benefit of creation (Jansen, 2015:20-23; cf. Buys & Jansen, 2015:225-227). Integral word-and-deed ministry considers the contextual application of the *missio-Dei* motive and challenges the listeners to submit the different areas of their lives to God's kingdom (Jansen, 2015:24-25). Integral mission or holistic transformation entails the proclamation and demonstration of the Gospel, that call people to love and repentance in all areas of life (Micah Declaration on Integral Mission, 2001:1).

When a church prioritizes its mission, it ought to incorporate evangelizing into its ministry of compassion (James 1:19-27; 2:14-26). The rationale is that God uses evangelizing and mission to address the issue of broken people in a spiritually and practically relevant manner (Wright, 2011:328). The focus of Word preaching is on both the forgiveness of sins and human life. Since the Gospel is the good news of God's reign over all of creation being actively present, the Word is essential (Jansen, 2015:24). Injustice and oppression are widespread worldwide. However, because these communities can also be a blessing to other countries, God's plan for impoverished communities is one of justice and righteousness (Wright, 2011:369).

Conclusion

In the context of this paper, "mission" refers to taking part in God's work and message. What God is doing in people's lives should be reflected and embodied in mission and evangelizing through Jesus Christ. While there are certain gaps in the social involvement of believers, it also has implications for mission and evangelism because it demonstrates the transforming grace of Jesus Christ. In underprivileged communities, God's mission of bringing the entire creation back to himself ought to be a top priority and inspire faith in Jesus Christ. The conclusions of this larger study indicate that more research on this topic is required to improve the applicability of both the current and future studies. It is necessary to consider how this essential missiological study can be applied practically in South African churches, schools, and organizations, as well as in similar contexts around the world, to bring about a significant difference and transformative impact.

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