

TEN PARADIGM SHIFTS TOWARD COMMUNITY TRANSFORMATION

How Churches Are Impacting Their Communities with the Good Deeds and Good News of the Gospel

by Eric Swanson

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About the Author.

Eric Swanson works with Leadership Network concentrating on externally focused churches. For the past several months Eric has researched churches around the country that are engaging their communities with good news and good works. Prior to coming to Leadership Network, Eric served with Campus Crusade for Christ for 25 years. He and his family reside in Louisville, Colorado.

Leadership Network.

For the last 2000 years, the Church in its various forms, styles and manifestations has been the hope of the world. Over the past twenty centuries of human history, when change has been the most intense, the Church has thrived. As we enter the third Millennium, the Church of North America faces the opportunity to once again become a positive force for change.

Leadership Network is a nonprofit organization providing Leadership Communities for innovative leaders in North American churches. Leadership Network includes a network of large churches, nontraditional churches, missional churches and church leaders. We search for innovative church leaders who find themselves both immersed in and excited by the tumultuous change of this age. These leaders are found in churches of all denominations and sizes across the United States and Canada. They are of all ages and ethnicities. They are Leadership Network.

A small cloud is on the horizon. The winds of change are beginning to gather strength and with certainty a storm is coming...change is coming. All over our nation there is a quiet movement of the Spirit of God that is causing believers to re-examine how they “do church.” Churches around our nation are throwing out the old measures of success. It’s no longer merely about size, seeker sensitivity, spiritual gifts, church health, nor the number of small groups. It’s about making a significant and sustainable difference in the lives of people around us—in our communities and in our cities.

There is a growing awareness that we cannot continue to do the same old things and expect a different result. If we want to be the salt and light we as the church were created to be, we have to do something different...we have to be something different! Community transformation is not found in programs, strategies, campaigns or tactics. For most of us, it will take nothing less than a shift of seismic proportions in what the church is to be in the 3rd millennium. A paradigm is a model consisting of shared assumptions regarding what works or what is true. A paradigm shift is that “aha!” moment when one sees things in such a new light that one can never go back to the old ways again. Each paradigm shift takes us from a model of thinking that we must discard to a new model that we must embrace. A new paradigm is the new wineskins that will be needed to hold the new assumptions about what is true. To maximize our impact on our communities—urban, suburban or rural, we need changes in at least ten of our paradigms of how we currently view church.

1. From building walls to building bridges.

“You are the salt of the earth...You are the light of the world” (Matthew 5:13,14). The first paradigm shift pertains to where we, as the church, see ourselves in relation to our communities. Will we remain outside of the community inviting people in or will we go to our communities, seeking to be a transforming agent? The church is called to be separate in lifestyle but never called to be isolated from the people it seeks to influence. For many years founding pastor, Robert Lewis, of Fellowship Bible Church (FBC) in Little Rock, Arkansas, was content to be growing a successful suburban mega church. By his admission, FBC was a “success church.” Success churches seek to grow by having attractive programs and offerings that people can come to and benefit from. However, Robert grew increasingly dissatisfied with the impact FBC was having on the community. So he made an appointment with the mayor of Little Rock and asked one question, “How can we help you?” The mayor responded with a list of challenges facing the greater Little Rock area. FBC then challenged themselves with the question, “What can we do that would cause people to marvel and say, ‘God is at work in a wonderful way for no one could do these things unless

God were with them?’” That one question was the first step in becoming what Lewis calls a “bridge-building church.” For the past four years, FBC has joined with over 100 other churches and over 5,000 volunteers in the greater Little Rock area and served their communities by building parks and playgrounds and refurbishing nearly 50 schools. They set records for Red Cross Blood donations and have enlisted thousands of new organ donors. They began reaching out to the community through “LifeSkill” classes (on finances, marriage, wellness, aging, etc.)



in public forums like banks and hotel rooms, with over 5,000 people attending. In the past four years, the churches of greater Little Rock have donated nearly a million dollars to community human service organizations that are effective in meeting the needs of at-risk youth. They have renovated homes and provided school uniforms, school supplies, winter coats, and Christmas toys for hundreds of children. After getting new shelving for her classrooms, one school principal said, “I think this is the most fabulous day of my life as far as education is concerned. I’ve been in this 29 years and this is the first time a community or church project has come through for us.” The churches of Little Rock have let their light shine in such a way that Jesus Christ is made real to the community. Once a church makes this mental shift regarding how it lives in its community, it is only limited by its creativity in how it can serve its community and be the salt and light it was meant to be. It makes the transition from providing ministry programs for the community to forever changing its relationship to a community.

2. From measuring attendance to measuring impact.

“The kingdom of heaven is like yeast...mixed into a large amount of flour until it’s worked all through the dough” (Matthew 13:33). In a post-modern world, most people are neither impressed with the size of a church or its commitment to “truth.” Yet from the cover of *TIME* magazine to the front page of the *Wall Street Journal*, transformational community-centered ministries are grabbing the attention of the American people. Perhaps, in this century, the greatest apologetic for the reality of Jesus Christ living in a community will be observational more than propositional. To have a faith that can be observed is to be living out the truths we want others to grasp and the life of the Savior we want them to know. When Jesus chose one passage to describe his mission and ministry, he picked up the scroll of Isaiah and read from Isaiah 61: “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the

brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners...to comfort all who mourn and provide for those who grieve in Zion—to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair... .” The way he “preached” best was by holistically combining proclaiming with comforting and providing. This is how Jesus did ministry. “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us” (John 1:14). Likewise, the apostle Paul was as “eager to remember the poor” (Galatians 2:10) as he was “eager to preach the gospel” (Romans 1:16,17). Effective ministry has always been holistic, combining good deeds with good news.

When Tillie Burgin started Mission Arlington, her mission was simple—take the church to the people who were not going to church—“to hang out and hover around John 3:16.” As she ventured out



to meet and minister to her neighbors, she was immediately challenged by Jehovah’s Witnesses who told her, “You’re invading our territory. Get back into your church building where you belong.” Today, Mission Arlington is a house church movement of nearly 250 community house churches (and nearly 4,000 in attendance) serving over 10,000 people a week in the Arlington, Texas, community with food, furniture, medical and dental care, school transportation, child and adult day care, counseling, etc. What can Jesus do for a community? The people of Arlington know. Every year hundreds of people come to Christ through this transformational ministry. Lives are being touched. Lives are being changed. The church should and can make a huge difference in a community.

Windsor Village United Methodist Church has made a big difference in southwest Houston,

Texas. From 25 members in 1982, Windsor Village is currently the spiritual home for more than 14,000 members. Embracing both evangelism and economic development and armed with the belief that every member is a minister, each congregant is encouraged to embrace Jesus' mission of identifying and holistically meeting the needs of those around them. Under the leadership of pastor Kirbyjon Caldwell, the church purchased a 104,000 square-foot former K-Mart that was converted into their "Power Center." Since 1999, the Power Center has had an estimated \$28.7 million impact on the community creating over 500 construction jobs and 300 regular jobs through the Power Center which serves over 9,000 families a month through Windsor Village's 100-plus ministries. Currently, they are engaged in developing a 24-acre planned residential community consisting of over 450 affordable single-family homes called Corinthian Pointe and they continue to make a difference.

"HOW BIG IS YOUR CHURCH?" SHOULD BE REPLACED WITH "HOW BIG IS THE IMPACT YOU ARE HAVING ON YOUR COMMUNITY?"



In 1988, Vaughn and Narlene McLaughlin moved into a depressed area of Jacksonville, Florida, to begin a church designed to meet the needs of the whole person. Today, their converted Bell South building called the "Multiplex" houses nearly 20 for-profit businesses including The Potter's House Café, a credit union, a beauty salon, a graphic design studio and a Greyhound Bus terminal, all started by church members who lacked capital, but had a dream. Another building serves as an incubator for two dozen new businesses. The Multiplex also houses a 500-student Christian academy. In addition to their ministries of economic empowerment

and education, they also have nearly 25 other ministries such as a prison and jail ministry, youth ministry, Big and Little Brothers, and free car repair. They also have a team of 250 volunteers who "look after things in the city" even if it means to simply sweep the streets of Jacksonville. Though an outstanding preacher, to Bishop Vaughn McLaughlin, ministry is always what happens outside the church—"If you are not making an impact outside of your four walls, then you are not making an impact at all." In 1999, Bishop McLaughlin was named "Entrepreneur of the Year" by Florida State University. Is it any mystery why the city and its leaders have so wholeheartedly embraced The Potter's House? The question he repeatedly asks is the question that churches in all kinds of neighborhoods are increasingly asking themselves: "Would the community weep if your church were to pull out of the city? Would anybody notice if you left?"

The question, "How big is your church?" should be replaced with "How big is the impact you are having on your community?" Every other measure is interesting but not relevant. Let's refuse to be impressed by numbers alone. There are many ways to engage the community and make an impact. The only "bad" way to engage the community in service is not to engage at all!

3. From encouraging the saints to attend the service to equipping the saints for works of service.

"It is (God) who gave some to be...pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service..." (Ephesians 4:11-13). In the typical church, lay people are asked to serve in five or six capacities:

- Teach a Sunday School class
- Work in the nursery
- Lead a home Bible study or small group
- Sing in the choir
- Be an usher or greeter
- Serve on a board or committee.

Pastors lament that only about 20% of their members are "active." Could it be that the service opportunities are not broad enough to

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engage the energies and passions of people in the church? Robert Lewis notes that when people entered his church they were excited for about four to five years. How could they not be excited? Fellowship Bible is a teaching church and Robert is an incredible teacher. However,

he observes that after around five years, people get bored with church if they are not involved in ministering to others. It was not until the church began to serve their community that members found their serving niche and continued in their growth. Tim Keller of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York City writes that the process of mobilizing members into ministers “starts by articulating clearly and regularly a theology of ‘every-member ministry’...From the pulpit, in the classes, by word of mouth, it must be communicated that every layperson is a minister and that ministry is finding needs and meeting them in the goal of the spread of the kingship of Christ.”

Churches like Cincinnati’s Vineyard have also found that it is easier and more effective to recruit existing small groups to engage in ministry and service projects than it is to motivate, administer spiritual gift tests and recruit individuals to serve in a ministry. You can serve in most any ministry with your friends.

In the 1980’s, a small group in Mariner’s Church in Costa Mesa, California, met for a year to study every scripture that had to do with the people of God and the needs of a community. They asked themselves two questions—“What could we

do?” and “What should we do?” This was the beginning of Mariner’s “Lighthouse

Ministries.” Today, Lighthouse is employing the volunteer hearts and entrepreneurial skills to minister to the under-resourced people of Orange County. In 2001, Lighthouse Ministries employed the dedication and talents of nearly 3,400 church volunteers who gave 95,000 hours of service (the equivalent of 46 full-time staff!) in the form of tutoring foster children, mentoring motel families, taking kids to camp, visiting the elderly, teaching English at one of their learning centers, working in the Mariner’s Thrift Store (\$168,000 in sales last year), distributing Christmas gifts, team building with teens at their leadership camp, assistance with immigration papers, working in transitional housing or volunteering with Orange County Social Services. Despite the prolific use of volunteers, volunteering is simply the avenue to “build relationships with people in our community.” Recently they were featured on National Public Radio for their work in providing transitional housing for youth leaving foster care. Last year they touched the lives of nearly 12,000 people in their community through their relational volunteer ministries. Their mission of “bringing Christ’s hope to those in need” is being fulfilled.



4. From “serve us” to service—from inward to outward focus.

“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give...” (Mark 10:45). Several years ago, Chuck Colson made the observation that when the Communists took over Russia in 1917, they did not make Christianity illegal. Their constitution, in fact, did guarantee freedom of religion. However, what they did make illegal was for the church to do any “good works.” No longer could the church fulfill its historic role in feeding the hungry, welcoming the stranger, housing the orphan, educating children or caring for the sick. What was the result? 70 years later, the

church was totally irrelevant to the communities in which it dwelt. What Lenin did by diabolic design, most churches have done by default. But the result is identical. Church is irrelevant to most people. Take away service and you take away the church's power, influence, and evangelistic effectiveness. The power of the gospel is combining the life-changing message with selfless service.

Marion Patillo is the executive director of a ministry in Dallas called Metro-Link. As the name suggests, Metro-Link serves as a "conduit" between volunteers from some 40 churches and 27 city blocks in South Dallas. Marion observes that when Metro-Link began, there were 955 churches in South Dallas yet



the area was rife with crime, alcoholism, drug addiction and prostitution. Why? It was certainly not from the lack of churches! The problem centers on the fact that most churches had not been serving this community. It is

observations like this that caused Charles Chaney, former head of Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, to remark, "America will not be won to Christ by existing churches, even if they should suddenly become vibrantly and evangelistically alive. Nor will the U.S. be won to Christ by establishing more churches like the vast majority of those we now have." The power of the church is not merely in the number of churches, but the focus of those churches.

Mary Francis Boley, was the director of women's ministry at First Baptist Church in Peachtree City, Georgia. Women from metro Atlanta would gather each week around coffee and an open Bible. However, the ministry took a radical step forward when Mary Francis decided that no Bible studies could meet unless they included a component of ministry to the community. So

they scoured Atlanta for the women in the "highways and hedges" whom nobody else was reaching. They identified cashiers, food service employees, hairdressers, single moms, the women's shelter, strippers and prostitutes. Mary Francis calls her ministry, "Wellspring of Living Water." The goal of Wellspring is to get the women within the church to reach the women who are outside of the walls of the church. Mary Francis' purpose is to "save the women in Atlanta"—and that begins with the women who are in the pews of the church every Sunday. She firmly believes that people cannot grow into Christian maturity without giving themselves away to others. By ministering to "the least of these" they invite the presence of Jesus into their ministry (Matthew 25:31-46). Lives are being touched and changed.

Erwin McManus of Mosaic Church in East Los Angeles says that the single biggest factor in his church retaining people is not personal follow-up or joining a small group; it is being involved from the very beginning in service to others in the community. When members have told him that they want the church to meet their needs, his reply is "You ARE the church and together we are called to meet the needs of the world." Over 1,800 members agree. We grow and are healed as we serve others. Maybe this is what Isaiah (58:6-8) had in mind when he penned God's words to his people: "Is this not the

IMAGINE HOW GREAT IT WOULD BE IF YOUR CHURCH BULLETIN INCLUDED NOT ONLY THE MEN'S AND WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY TIMES, BUT ALSO A LIST OF 20-30 "COMMUNITY PARTNER MINISTRIES" AS WELL.



kind of fasting I have chosen: To loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter...? Then your light will break forth like the dawn and your healing will quickly appear." What if we settled for nothing less than 100% of our church members engaged at some level in meaningful ministry to the community? People (or small groups) could choose their field and level of engagement (from once a week to once a year), but non-involvement would not be an option.

5. From duplication of human services and ministries to partnering with existing services and ministries.

"Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work" (Ecclesiastes 4:9). Nearly every community has a number of human service agencies that are morally positive and spiritually neutral that are doing their best to meet the needs of the underserved and under-resourced people of the community. Such agencies include the local food banks, homeless shelters, emergency family housing, and safe houses for abused women, etc. Equally present, there are church and parachurch ministries that are effective in ministering to specific target audiences (business community, youth, college students, etc). Rather than starting a new ministry, why not form partnerships with existing groups as "partner ministries" of a local congregation? Chances are that people from your congregation are already serving in many of these organizations. Why not use the current community energy to create synergy? The Bible is replete with examples of how God used secular people in partnership with his people to fulfill his purposes. Think of Joseph and Pharaoh, Nehemiah and Artaxerxes, and Esther and King Ahasuerus. Instead of each congregation having its own food pantry, why not partner with the local community food bank? When needy people request food, congregations could refer these folks to their "partner ministry." In our Boulder County community, Big Brothers Big

Sisters of America (BBBSA) has 200 boys on a list waiting for an older mentor, yet how many churches do you know that are saying, "One of these days we'd like to begin a youth mentoring program." Why not form a partnership with BBBSA? Let BBBSA shoulder the cost and liability for screening applicants. There is no reason to form a duplicate ministry if the service or ministry already exists and is effective in accomplishing its mission. Imagine how great it would be if your church bulletin included not only the men's and women's Bible study times but also a list of 20-30 "Community Partner Ministries"



as well. Maybe we can effectively love our city with the love of Jesus Christ through agencies and mechanisms that already exist! Most human service agencies need what the church could readily supply—caring volunteers, financial support and even facilities. The door is always open for servants wanting to serve and help. We form partnerships not around theology but around our common concern and love for the city.

Rick Rusaw is pastor of the 2,900-member LifeBridge Christian Church in Longmont, Colorado. Several years ago, LifeBridge made a conscious decision to "care for their community." They invited local human service agencies to office on their campus and encouraged members to get involved in the life of the community. "We're just looking for ways to help the city," Rick explains. "For example, we decided we didn't want to start a Christian school but to get involved in serving the needs of the existing public schools of our community. We don't need to duplicate what is already out there." Last year



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when a local high school student took his life, the school principal called Rick at LifeBridge and asked if they could send over 20 counselors for three days to be on campus with the kids. When asked about how they gained such access into a public high school, Rick responds that he sent over the same 20 folks who had been setting up chairs at assemblies and raking the long-jump pit all year long. Servants always have access to the palaces of kings. Last year over a thousand people from LifeBridge donated 6,000 hours of community service over Christmas break cleaning three elementary schools top to bottom and then spent another six weekends fixing up a mobile home park. Five auto mechanics from LifeBridge serviced over 300 cars of single moms in the Longmont area. Recently, LifeBridge members came up with 5,000 new ways they could serve their community. Rick sums up his commitment to Longmont—"I used to think I could change the world. Now I just want to change the stream...not by standing on the bank and yelling, but by getting in the water."

6. From fellowship to functional unity.

There is a strong case to suggest that there is really only one church in a city or community (made up of all believers) that meets in several congregations around the city. In Philippians 2:2, Paul implored, "...make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose." Only unity of purpose around the vision of a transformed community is strong enough to unite pastors and churches of different denominations. Jack Dennison of CitiReach writes, "While solid relationships form the basis for unity, we can't stop there. My observation in city after city is that oftentimes unity becomes an end in itself. So, we see repetitive efforts to demonstrate our unity through citywide

worship events, prayer vigils...and other similar events. These activities...are wonderful symbols of our unity, but they rarely produce real substance. They make us feel good and sometimes result in great newspaper coverage, but the cities remain unchanged." Uniting the church around a common goal is preferable to trying to unite the church around a cooperative project. We align ourselves "in unity to pursue the same goals for our community while each participant determines the part it should play." Functional unity does not exclude cooperative efforts, but functional unity also implies that each church can act with a degree of sanctified independence, not waiting for permission from others to serve the community, as long as it is working toward the agreed upon vision of a healthy, transformed community. Community transformation begins at the intersection of the needs and dream of a community, the calling and capacities of the church and the mandates and desires of God for a community.



In 1990, pastors and Christian leaders in Fresno, California, "fueled by the pain of the city," formed a multi-sector leadership team and began praying together for their community. Emphasizing compassion over power, this "no name fellowship" was the beginning of unprecedented cooperation not just among the faith community, but also between the faith community and other entities serving the city. By "connecting leaders who often never cross paths," what has come to be known simply as

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“One by One Leadership” is “transforming geography into community” through mentoring, tutoring, job training, community storehouse, asset-based community development, welfare to work, police / church partnerships and a myriad of other civic engagements. “It works because we love each other, we trust each other and we hold each other accountable,” says Fresno pastor Paul Binyon. Other cities like Houston, Pittsburgh, Jacksonville, Little Rock, New York City and several others are being changed because the church is coming together around a common vision for what the city can become through significant ministry and service.

7. From condemning the city to blessing the city and praying for it.

Jeremiah 29 begins by saying; “This is the text of the letter that the prophet Jeremiah sent from Jerusalem...to those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon.” What follows are instructions on how to live as aliens in a foreign land. Listen to his admonition: “Seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper” (v. 7).

For too long, we as the church have positioned ourselves as adversaries to our communities. The monolithic church has stood from afar and lobbed in pontifical salvos



condemning the city and those who are trying to serve it. Maybe it is time we began blessing the city by blessing those who have given themselves to the city! Pastors in our Colorado community have begun inviting

city officials and influencers to their monthly lunches. The mayor, the chief of police, district attorney, editor of the newspaper, the university president, and others have spoken to this ministerial alliance. After these guests address the gathering, they are prayed over

and the ministers thank God for these folks and ask Him to bless these city servants (1 Timothy 2:1-4). Anyone can curse the city, but pastors are in a unique position to really “bless” a city and her people. Each year, the church in Little Rock has honored a different group of servants—the police, firefighters, schoolteachers, etc., at their annual “Share Fest.” This past year, Adam Hamilton, pastor of the United Methodist Church of the Resurrection (COR) in Leawood, Kansas, passed out the names of every teacher, administrator and employee of the Kansas City School District—one for every one of the 5,700 people in attendance. Each person was asked to pray regularly for that person and send a card of encouragement and appreciation. The response was overwhelming! From that one strategic blessing, scores and scores of COR members are now volunteering and tutoring the children of Kansas City...and are transforming the city. Perhaps the next great reconciliation movement will be between the church and the community.

We not only need to bless our communities, but we need to pray for them as well. The extent that we will impact our communities will be proportionate to how effectively each influential segment of our community (educators, business, law enforcement, arts, civic leaders, human service agencies, etc.) are being supported by prayer. 230 congregations in Jacksonville are praying daily for every one of the police force through their “Adopt-a-Cop” ministry. Twice a year in Little Rock, over 1,000 people come together to intercede on behalf of the city. In Houston, Doug Stringer of Turning Point Ministries (“Somebody Cares Houston”) writes that over 75% of Houston’s 2,700 square miles are now covered by daily prayer by the church in Houston. It’s hard to be adversaries with those you pray God’s blessings on. All over our nation, through organized efforts like Concerts of Prayer and Mission America’s Lighthouses of Prayer movement, walls are coming down. Individuals and communities are being supported by prayer. The church is being reconciled to the community.

8. From being a minister in a congregation to being a minister in a parish.

“As Jesus approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it...” (Luke 19:41). A congregation is made up of people who attend a local church from a community. The minister typically feels that this congregation is his flock whom he must baptize, marry and bury. They consume his time and energy. Being in a parish is different. A parish differs from a congregation in that it is a geographical scope of concern and responsibility. A congregation is a subset of a parish. So what difference does that make? Being in a parish gives one the God-given right to minister to anyone in the community, whether they are part of one’s congregation or not. Urban theologian, Ray Bakke, illuminates this point by writing that every minister has two functions; 1) to be pastor to the members and 2) chaplain to the community.

Rich is a pastor of a small church in our city. His congregation is 70 but his parish is over 90,000! Rich sits comfortably serving between the human service community and the faith community. Rich’s office is the local coffee shop. His tools are his cell phone and his laptop. Rich is the person God has used to connect our community leaders to our monthly ministerial alliance meetings. His days are often filled with walking through



our city and interceding for it. Isaiah 61 describes the reward of those who “rebuild... restore...(and) renew” the city. It is the city who bestows on them their titles — “And you will be called priests of the Lord, you will be named ministers of our God” (Isaiah 61:6).

9. From anecdote and speculation to valid information.

Two pieces of information changed the course

of Nehemiah’s life that resulted in the transformation of a community. In Nehemiah 1, Nehemiah learned that the walls and gates of Jerusalem were broken down and her people were in great distress. These two pieces of accurate information were catalytic to Nehemiah’s prayers and plans to restore a broken wall and a broken people. His burden to transform the city came from accurate information. We, too, need correct information about the real needs of our community as well as the resources we have to meet these needs. Do we know the demographic information of our community? Do we know the number of churches? Do we know the spiritual history of our community? Ray Bakke writes that in assessing community needs we need to identify the people in need (poor, disadvantaged, children, elderly, single parents, disabled, prisoners, sick, aliens, etc.) along with the type of needs they have (physical, spiritual / moral, social, emotional or cognitive). Most information is readily available through local human service agencies and the census bureau. We also need to identify the spiritual assets of our community—the number of faith communities and believers. Together, these two research pieces give us a picture of our “mission field” and our “mission force.” Armed with accurate information, we can determine best how to go forward.

In 1994, 21-year-old Pastor Matthew Barnett began the Los Angeles “Dream Center” by walking around his neighborhood looking for unmet needs. He saw the thousands of outcast people living on the fringes of society. Today, the Dream Center—“the church that never sleeps” has adopted 50 city blocks (2,100 homes!) that it serves with 200 volunteer staff. Its Franciscan Hospital campus houses 400 people in its rehab and discipleship program and feeds more than 25,000 people a week. They have a free 24-hour medical clinic, a mobile medical unit and dozens of effective ministries that are finding needs and meeting them. Scores of churches around our country have adapted the Adopt a Block strategy as a means of touching the lives of people around them.

In our town of Boulder, Colorado, the pastors realized that they knew very little about the other agencies that were serving our community. They decided to organize a one-day “Magic Bus Tour” to meet with the directors of these agencies to find out what they did and what help they needed. They visited a local shelter, a food bank, a day-care facility, a health clinic, a home for runaway youth, an AIDS project, etc.—a total of eight agencies. It was the beginning of bridge-building relationships between the faith community and the community where new openness, healing and friendships have begun. Our pastors are now ministering to AIDS patients and utilizing their churches for overflow nights in partnership with a homeless shelter. One pastor, who is now taking meals to AIDS patients on a weekly basis, was drawn into this ministry by two things—“This was a group of people who were in need of the grace of God and also the group I was most uncomfortable with, so I just thought it was something God wanted me to be a part of. If anything, this ministry is changing my life.”

10. From teacher to learner.

“Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak...” (James 1:19). It is interesting to note that for the historic African-American churches, the concept of holistic ministry is not a new concept. They have never suffered from trying to split effective evangelism from social justice or meeting the needs of those around them. It’s how they’ve always done church. A study of 2,150 black churches by C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya in their book, *The Black Church in the African American Experience*, report that nearly “70% of black churches are involved with social service agencies and non-church programs in dealing with community problems.” The effective churches see the community as one that is full of assets, more than full of problems. Churches in New York City, like Concord Baptist Church of Christ, Allen AME, Bethel Gospel Assembly to those in Los Angeles like First AME, Faithful Central Bible Church and West Angeles COGIC, have led the way in transforming and preserving

their communities. John Dilulio, former Director of the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, cites a study of over 400 of the roughly 2,000 community-serving congregations in Philadelphia:

- Over 90 percent of urban congregations provide social services, from preschools to prison ministries, from food pantries to health clinics, from literacy programs to day-care centers, etc.
- The replacement value of their services in Philadelphia alone is a very conservatively estimated quarter-billion dollars a year.

Suburban congregations have much to learn from these innovative leaders and ministries.

Where do we go from here?

From Isaiah 65:17-25, Ray Bakke outlines seven characteristics of a healthy community from the heart of God:

- Public celebration and happiness (18, 19)
- Public health for children and the aged (20)
- Housing for all (21)
- Food for all (22)
- Meaningful work (22, 23)
- Family support systems (23)
- Absence of violence (25).

This list outlines our potential marching orders. The Spirit of God is at work. There is a good chance that the next great movement of God will involve putting the church back into community where it can be the leaven, salt and light God designed the church to be. Will we join God in this transforming work? For the sake of the gospel, the church and our communities, in faith... let's move forward!

What are the next steps for you?

- Which paradigms do you readily identify with? Which principles or illustrations speak to you most strongly?
- How would you answer the question, "Tell me about the impact your church is having on your community?"
- Define your "growth model" for individuals? Can those in your church grow significantly apart from service? Why or why not?
- What are some natural ways you can begin building bridges into your community?
- Where is the "low-hanging fruit" for your church?
- Where do you sense is your first (or next) entry point into your community?
- What are the internal / external barriers to entering into the life of your community?
- What human service agencies would make natural "partner ministries" for your church?
- How can you begin expressing "unity of purpose" with others in the faith community?
- What are some ways that you can "bless" your city?
- How can you begin to get good information about your community's "mission field" and "mission force?"
- Discuss the "Ten Paradigm Shifts" with your staff / board at your next leadership retreat.

WEB RESOURCES

To learn more about these and other transforming ministries you can go to the following web sites:

Bear Valley Church—www.bvchurch.org
Bethel Church—www.bethel-church.org
Bethel Gospel Assembly—www.bethelgospelassembly.org
Calvary Baptist Church—www.calvarysc.org
Calvary Bible Church of Boulder—www.calvaryboulder.org
Christ Community Church of Omaha—www.christcomm.org
Christian Life Center—www.clctoday.org
Church of the Resurrection—www.cor.org
Community Church of Joy of Glendale, AZ—www.joyonline.org
Cornwall Church—www.cornwallchurch.com
Creeside Community Church—www.creesidecommunity.org
Crossroads Christian Church—www.xroadschurch.org
CrossWalk Community UMC—www.crosswalkcommunity.org
Dream Center—www.dreamcenter.org
Emmanuel Baptist Church—www.godiswithus.org
Episcopal Church of the Ascension—www.ascensiondallas.org
Faith Lutheran Church of Golden—www.faithgolden.org
Faith Reformed Church—www.frchurch.org
Fellowship Bible Church of Little Rock—www.fbclr.org
First AME—www.famechurch.org
First Baptist Church of Elk Grove—www.fbceg.org
First Baptist Church of Leesburg—www.fbcleesburg.org
First Baptist Church of Richmond—www.fbcrichmond.org
Ginghamsburg UMC—www.ginghamsburg.org
Grace Brethren Church of Long Beach—www.gracelb.org
Greenwood Community Church—www.greenwoodcc.com
Harambee—www.harambee.org, www.urbanonramps.com
Hempfield UMC—www.hempfieldchurch.org
Hope Church of Oakdale—www.hopechurchoakdale.com
Hope Presbyterian Church of Memphis—www.hopepres.com
Imago Dei Community—www.imagodeicommunity.com
King of Glory Lutheran Church—www.kingofglory.com
Lake Avenue Community Foundation—www.lakeavefoundation.org
LifeBridge Christian Church—www.lbcc.org
Love INC—www.loveinc.org
Mariner's Church—www.marinerslighthouse.org
Mission America / Lighthouse—www.missionamerica.org
Mission Arlington—www.missionarlington.org
Mission Year (Bart Campolo)—www.missionyear.org
Mosaic Church—www.mosaic.org
New Song Community Church—www.newsongchurch.com
Northland, A Church Distributed—www.northlandchurch.net
One by One Leadership—www.onebyoneleadership.com

Perimeter Church, Atlanta—www.perimeter.org
Potter's House Christian Fellowship—www.potters-house.org
Potter's House of Dallas—www.tdjakes.org
Ray Bakke, City Voices—www.cityvoices.com
Rolling Hills Community Church—www.rollinghills.org
Saint John's Downtown—www.stjohnsdowntown.org
SouthBrook Christian Church—www.southbrook.org
Stephen Ministries—www.stephenministries.org
The Fellowship at Cinco Ranch—www.thefellowship.org
The River Church Community—www.the-river.org
Turning Point Ministries—www.tpmi.org
University Baptist Church—www.ubc.org
Vineyard Church of Cincinnati—www.cincyvineyard.com
Wellspring of Living Water—www.wellspringoflivingwater.org
West Angeles COGIC—www.westa.org
West Conroe Baptist Church—www.wcbc.us
Willow Creek—www.willowcreek.org/community_care
Windsor Village UMC—www.kingdombuilder.com
Word of Grace—www.wordofgrace.org

BOOK RESOURCES

101 Ways to Reach Your Community, Steve Sjogren, Navpress, 2001.
A Revolution of Compassion, Dave Donaldson and Stanley Carlson-Thies, Baker Books, 2003.
A Theology As Big As the City, Ray Bakke, InterVarsity Press, 1997.
An Unstoppable Force, Erwin Raphael McManus, Group, 2001.
Better Together: Restoring the American Community, Robert D. Putnam, Simon & Schuster, 2003.
Beyond Charity, John Perkins, Baker Books, 1993.
Churches That Make a Difference, Sider, Olson, Unruh, Baker Books, 2002.
City Impact, Daniel Bernard, Chosen Books, 2004.
City Reaching: On the Road to Community Transformation, Jack Dennison, William Carey Library, 1999.
City-Wide Prayer Movements, Tom White, Vine Books, 2001.
Conspiracy of Kindness, Steve Sjogren, Servant Publications, 1993.
Divided by Faith, Michael O. Emerson and Christian Smith, Oxford University Press, 2000.
Meeting Needs, Sharing Christ, Donald Atkinson and Charles Roesel, Lifeway, 1995.
Ministries of Mercy: The Call of the Jericho Road, Timothy J. Keller, Zondervan, 1998.
Restorers of Hope, Amy Sherman, Crossway Books, 1997.
Revolution and Renewal, Tony Campolo, John Knox Press, 2000.
Signs of Hope in the City, Robert D. Carle and Louis B. Decaro Jr., Judson Press, 1999.
Street Saints, Barbara J. Elliott, Templeton Foundation Press, 2004.
The Church of Irresistible Influence, Robert Lewis, Zondervan, 2001.
The Church That Never Sleeps, Matthew Barnett, Nelson, 2000.
The Externally Focused Church, Rick Rusaw and Eric Swanson, Group, 2004.
Transforming Power, Robert Linthicum, InterVarsity Press, 2003.

SCRIPTURAL RESOURCES

Scriptures Revealing God's Heart for the Poor, the Needy, Widows, Orphans, and Aliens

"Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates" (Exodus 20:9-10).

"Do not mistreat an alien or oppress him, for you were aliens in Egypt." (Exodus 22:21).

"Do not take advantage of a widow or an orphan. If you do and they cry out to me, I will certainly hear their cry" (Exodus 22:22-23).

"Do not deny justice to your poor people in their lawsuits" (Exodus 23:6).

"During the seventh year let the land lie unplowed and unused. Then the poor among your people may get food from it, and the wild animals may eat what they leave. Do the same with your vineyard and your olive grove" (Exodus 23:11).

"Do not go over your vineyard a second time or pick up the grapes that have fallen. Leave them for the poor and the alien. I am the Lord your God" (Leviticus 19:10).

"When an alien lives with you in your land, do not mistreat him. The alien living with you must be treated as one of your native-born. Love him as yourself, for you were aliens in Egypt. I am the Lord your God" (Leviticus 19:33-34).

"When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. Leave them for the poor and the alien. I am the Lord your God" (Leviticus 23:22).

"If one of your countrymen becomes poor and is unable to support himself among you, help him as you would an alien or a temporary resident, so he can continue to live among you" (Leviticus 25:35).

"The community is to have the same rules for you and for the alien living among you; this is a lasting ordinance for the generations to come. You and the alien shall be the same before the Lord: The same laws and regulations will apply both to you and to the alien living among you" (Numbers 15:15-16).

"For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes. He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the alien, giving him food and clothing. And you are to love those who are aliens, for you yourselves were aliens in Egypt" (Deuteronomy 10:17-19).

"At the end of every three years, bring all the tithes of that year's produce and store it in your towns, so that the Levites (who have no allotment or inheritance of their own) and the aliens, the fatherless and the widows who live in your towns may come and eat and be satisfied, and so that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands" (Deuteronomy 14:28-29).

"There should be no poor among you, for in the land the Lord your God is giving you to possess as your inheritance, he will richly bless you" (Deuteronomy 15:4).

"If there is a poor man among your brothers in any of the towns of the land that the Lord your God is giving you, do not be hardhearted or tightfisted toward your poor brother" (Deuteronomy 15:7).

"There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore I command you to be openhanded toward your brothers and toward the poor and needy in your land" (Deuteronomy 15:11).

"Be joyful at your Feast—you, your sons and daughters, your menservants and maidservants, and the Levites, the aliens, the fatherless and the widows who live in your towns" (Deuteronomy 16:14).

"When you make a loan of any kind to your neighbor, do not go into his house to get what he is offering as a pledge. Stay outside and let the man to whom you are making the loan bring the pledge out to you. If the man is poor, do not go to sleep with his pledge in your possession. Return his cloak to him by sunset so that he may sleep in it. Then he will thank you, and it will be regarded as a righteous act in the sight of the Lord your God. Do not take advantage of a hired man who is poor and needy, whether he is a brother Israelite or an alien living in one of your towns. Pay him his wages each day before sunset, because he is poor and is counting on it. Otherwise he may cry to the Lord against you, and you will be guilty of sin" (Deuteronomy 24:10-15).

“Do not deprive the alien or the fatherless of justice, or take the cloak of the widow as a pledge. Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and the Lord your God redeemed you from there. That is why I command you to do this. When you are harvesting in your field and you overlook a sheaf, do not go back to get it. Leave it for the alien, the fatherless and the widow, so that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands. When you beat the olives from your trees, do not go over the branches a second time. Leave what remains for the alien, the fatherless and the widow. When you harvest the grapes in your vineyard, do not go over the vines again. Leave what remains for the alien, the fatherless and the widow” (Deuteronomy 24:17-21).

“When you have finished setting aside a tenth of all your produce in the third year, the year of the tithe, you shall give it to the Levite, the alien, the fatherless and the widow, so that they may eat in your towns and be satisfied. Then say to the Lord your God: ‘I have removed from my house the sacred portion and have given it to the Levite, the alien, the fatherless and the widow, according to all you commanded. I have not turned aside from your commands nor have I forgotten any of them’” (Deuteronomy 26:12-13).

“Cursed is the man who withholds justice from the alien, the fatherless or the widow” (Deuteronomy 27:19).

“He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap; he seats them with princes and has them inherit a throne of honor. ‘For the foundations of the earth are the Lord’s; upon them he has set the world’” (1 Samuel 2:8).

“He wrote them to observe the days as days of feasting and joy and giving presents of food to one another and gifts to the poor” (Esther 9:22b).

“His children must make amends to the poor; his own hands must give back his wealth” (Job 20:10).

“Though you were a powerful man, owning land—an honored man, living on it. And you sent widows away empty-handed and broke the strength of the fatherless. That is why snares are all around you, why sudden peril terrifies you” (Job 22:8-10).

“Whoever heard me spoke well of me, and those who saw me commended me, because I rescued the poor who cried for help, and the fatherless who had none to assist him. The man who was dying blessed me; I made the widow’s heart sing” (Job 29:11-13).

“Have I not wept for those in trouble? Has not my soul grieved for the poor?” (Job 30:25).

“If I have denied the desires of the poor or let the eyes of the widow grow weary, if I have kept my bread to myself, not sharing it with the fatherless—but from my youth I reared him as would a father, and from my birth I guided the widow—if I have seen anyone perishing for lack of clothing, or a needy man without a garment, and his heart did not bless me for warming him with the fleece from my sheep, if I have raised my hand against the fatherless, knowing that I had influence in court, then let my arm fall from the shoulder, let it be broken off at the joint. For I dreaded destruction from God, and for fear of his splendor I could not do such things” (Job 31:16-23).

“If the men of my household have never said, ‘Who has not had his fill of Job’s meat?’—but no stranger had to spend the night in the street, for my door was always open to the traveler” (Job 31:31-32).

“[God] shows no partiality to princes and does not favor the rich over the poor, for they are all the work of his hands?” (Job 34:19).

“You evildoers frustrate the plans of the poor, but the Lord is their refuge” (Psalm 14:6).

“A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling” (Psalm 68:5).

“Your people settled in it, and from your bounty, O God, you provided for the poor” (Psalm 68:10).

“Do not let the oppressed retreat in disgrace; may the poor and needy praise your name” (Psalm 74:21).

“How long will you defend the unjust and show partiality to the wicked? Defend the cause of the weak and fatherless; maintain the rights of the poor and oppressed. Rescue the weak and needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked” (Psalm 82:2-4).

“For he never thought of doing a kindness, but hounded to death the poor and the needy and the brokenhearted” (Psalm 109:16).

“He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor, his righteousness endures forever” (Psalm 112:9).

“He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap; he seats them with princes, with the princes of their people” (Psalm 113:7-8).

“I know that the Lord secures justice for the poor and upholds the cause of the needy” (Psalm 140:12).

“The Lord watches over the alien and sustains the fatherless and the widow, but he frustrates the ways of the wicked” (Psalm 146:9).

“He upholds the cause of the oppressed and gives food to the hungry. The Lord sets prisoners free, the Lord gives sight to the blind, the Lord lifts up those who are bowed down, the Lord loves the righteous” (Psalm 146:7-8).

“Lazy hands make a man poor, but diligent hands bring wealth” (Proverbs 10:4).

“The wealth of the rich is their fortified city, but poverty is the ruin of the poor” (Proverbs 10:15).

“A poor man’s field may produce abundant food, but injustice sweeps it away” (Proverbs 13:23).

“The poor are shunned even by their neighbors, but the rich have many friends. He who despises his neighbor sins, but blessed is he who is kind to the needy” (Proverbs 14:20-21).

“He who oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honors God” (Proverbs 14:31).

“He who is kind to the poor lends to the Lord, and he will reward him for what he has done” (Proverbs 19:7).

“If a man shuts his ears to the cry of the poor, he too will cry out and not be answered” (Proverbs 21:13).

“Rich and poor have this in common: The Lord is the Maker of them all” (Proverbs 22:2).

“A generous man will himself be blessed, for he shares his food with the poor” (Proverbs 22:9).

“He who oppresses the poor to increase his wealth and he who gives gifts to the rich—both come to poverty” (Proverbs 22:16).

“Do not exploit the poor because they are poor and do not crush the needy in court, for the Lord will take up their case and will plunder those who plunder them” (Proverbs 22:22-23).

“He who increases his wealth by exorbitant interest amasses it for another, who will be kind to the poor” (Proverbs 28:8).

“He who gives to the poor will lack nothing, but he who closes his eyes to them receives many curses” (Proverbs 28:27).

“The righteous care about justice for the poor, but the wicked have no such concern” (Proverbs 29:7).

“If a king judges the poor with fairness, his throne will always be secure” (Proverbs 29:14).

“Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy” (Proverbs 31:8-9).

“She opens her arms to the poor and extends her hands to the needy” (Proverbs 31:20).

“Learn to do right! Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow” (Isaiah 1:17).

“Woe to those who make unjust laws, to those who issue oppressive decrees, to deprive the poor of their rights and withhold justice from the oppressed of my people, making widows their prey and robbing the fatherless” (Isaiah 10:1-2).

“But with righteousness he will judge the needy, with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth” (Isaiah 11:4).

“You have been a refuge for the poor, a refuge for the needy in his distress, a shelter from the storm and a shade from the heat” (Isaiah 25:4).

“The scoundrel’s methods are wicked; he makes up evil schemes to destroy the poor with lies, even when the plea of the needy is just” (Isaiah 32:7).

“Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—when you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?” (Isaiah 58:6-8).

“The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners” (Isaiah 61:6).

"Their evil deeds have no limit; they do not plead the case of the fatherless to win it, they do not defend the rights of the poor" (Jeremiah 5:28b).

"If you really change your ways and your actions and deal with each other justly, if you do not oppress the alien, the fatherless or the widow and do not shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not follow other gods to your own harm, then I will let you live in this place, in the land I gave your forefathers for ever and ever" (Jeremiah 7:5-7).

"This is what the Lord says: Do what is just and right. Rescue from the hand of his oppressor the one who has been robbed. Do no wrong or violence to the alien, the fatherless or the widow, and do not shed innocent blood in this place" (Jeremiah 22:3).

"He did what was right and just, so all went well with him. He defended the cause of the poor and needy, and so all went well. Is that not what it means to know me?" declares the Lord" (Jeremiah 22:15-16).

"Now this was the sin of your sister Sodom: She and her daughters were arrogant, overfed and unconcerned; they did not help the poor and needy" (Ezekiel 16:49).

"The people of the land practice extortion and commit robbery; they oppress the poor and needy and mistreat the alien, denying them justice" (Ezekiel 22:19).

"You are to allot it as an inheritance for yourselves and for the aliens who have settled among you and who have children. You are to consider them as native-born Israelites; along with you they are to be allotted an inheritance among the tribes of Israel" (Ezekiel 47:22).

"You trample on the poor and force him to give you grain. Therefore, though you have built stone mansions, you will not live in them; though you have planted lush vineyards, you will not drink their wine. For I know how many are your offenses and how great your sins. You oppress the righteous and take bribes and you deprive the poor of justice in the courts" (Amos 5:11-12).

"This is what the Lord Almighty says: 'Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another. Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the alien or the poor. In your hearts do not think evil of each other'" (Zechariah 7:9-10).

"So I will come near to you for judgment. I will be quick to testify against sorcerers, adulterers and perjurers, against those who defraud laborers of their wages, who oppress the widows and the fatherless, and deprive aliens of justice, but do not fear me,' says the Lord Almighty" (Malachi 3:5).

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:3).

"So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you give to the needy do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing" (Matthew 6:2-3).

"Jesus answered, 'If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me'" (Matthew 19:11).

"Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.' Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'" (Matthew 25:35-40).

"But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins worth only a fraction of a penny. Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, 'I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others'" (Mark 12:42-43).

"The poor you will always have with you, and you can help them any time you want. But you will not always have me" (Mark 14:7).

"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed" (Luke 4:18).

"Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys" (Luke 12:33).

“But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous” (Luke 14:13-14).

“When Jesus heard this, he said to him, ‘You still lack one thing. Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me’” (Luke 18:22).

“But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, ‘Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount’” (Luke 19:8).

“There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles’ feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need” (Acts 4:34-35).

“In Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha who was always doing good and helping the poor” (Acts 9:36).

“Cornelius, God has heard your prayer and remembered your gifts to the poor” (Acts 10:31).

“After an absence of several years, I came to Jerusalem to bring my people gifts for the poor and to present offerings” (Acts 24:17).

“For Macedonia and Achaia were pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem” (Acts 15:26).

“If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames but have not love, I gain nothing” (1 Corinthians 13:3).

“All they asked was that we should continue to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do” (Galatians 2:10).

“Give proper recognition to those widows who are really in need. But if a widow has children or grandchildren, these should learn first of all to put their religion into practice by caring for their own family and so repaying their parents and grandparents, for this is pleasing to God” (1 Timothy 5:3-4).

“If any woman who is a believer has widows in her family, she should help them and not let the church be burdened with them, so that the church can help those widows who are really in need” (1 Timothy 5:16).

“Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world” (James 1:27).

“My brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don’t show favoritism. Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in shabby clothes also comes in. If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, ‘Here’s a good seat for you,’ but say to the poor man, ‘You stand there’ or ‘Sit on the floor by my feet,’ have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? Listen, my dear brothers: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him? But you have insulted the poor” (James 2:1-6).

Scriptures Concerning Good Works and Good Deeds

“In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:16).

“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do” (Ephesians 2:8-10).

“Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus” (Philippians 1:6).

“Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose” (Philippians 2:12-13).

“And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God” (Colossians 1:10).

“And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work” (2 Corinthians 9:8).

“May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word” (2 Thessalonians 2:16-17).

“But with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God” (1 Timothy 2:10).

“And is well known for her good deeds, such as bringing up children, showing hospitality, washing the feet of the saints, helping those in trouble and devoting herself to all kinds of good deeds” (1 Timothy 5:10).

“In the same way, good deeds are obvious, and even those that are not cannot be hidden” (1 Timothy 5:25).

“Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share” (1 Timothy 6:18).

“If a man cleanses himself from the latter, he will be an instrument for noble purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work” (2 Timothy 2:21).

“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

“And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds” (Hebrews 10:24).

“May the God of peace...equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen” (Hebrews 13:20-21).

“What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him?” (James 2:14).

“Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom” (James 3:13).

“Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us” (1 Peter 2:12).



ERIC SWANSON

Leadership Network welcomes your response. This paper was written by **Eric Swanson**, Director of the Externally Focused Churches Leadership Community for Leadership Network. Editorial advisor was **Dave Travis**, Senior Vice President for Leadership Network. Contact them via gary.dungan@leadnet.org

Prior to his current role as Leadership Community Director, Eric Swanson was part of Campus Crusade for Christ for 25 years. Most recently, he served as director of charitable giving for Tango, a private investment company. Eric holds a bachelors degree in social science from the University of California at Berkeley and is a DMin candidate in Transformational Leadership for Ministry in the Global City. Eric is co-author of *The Externally Focused Church* (Group Publishing 2004). Eric and his wife, Liz, have three grown children and reside in Colorado.

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