A THEOLOGY OF SERVICE

How to best serve God, His Kingdom and our communities

***Classic Community Organizing vs Holistic Christian Organizing***

Classical Community Organizing

The Definition of Community Organizing

Classic: The coordination of cooperative efforts and campaigning carried out by local residents to promote the interests of their community.

Wikipedia: Community organizing is a process where people who live in proximity to each other come together into an organization that acts in their shared self-interest.

The History of Community Organizing

Lao Tzu (400 BC?), Jesus Christ, Susan B. Anthony (1820-1906 [Women Suffrage]), Harriett Tubman (1822-1913 [Underground Railroad] If you hear the dogs, keep going. If you see the torches in the woods, keep going. If they are shouting after you, keep going. Don’t ever stop. Keep going. If you want a taste of freedom, keep going.), Mohandas Gandhi (1869-1948 [Passive Resistance]), Dorothy Day (1897-1980 [Catholic Worker Movement]), Saul Alinski (1909-1972 [Father of Modern Community Organizing]), Jane Jacobs (1916-2006 [Neighborhood Revitalization]), Martin Luther King, jr (1929-1968 [Civil Rights Leader]), Cesar Chavez (1927-1993 [Farm workers’ rights])

Types of Community Organizing

Social Work: Delivering social services to the community

Political Activist: Empowering the neglected

Neighborhood Maintenance/Community Development: Improving economic potential

Si Kahn’s Principles of Community Organizing

***Bio:*** A lifelong activist who participated in the most successful ‘social reform campaigns in recent American history ’such as the Southern Civil Rights Movements, the Harlan County Coal Miner’s Strike’, etc… He describes himself as one who has made a ‘living as a professional civil rights, labor and community organizer.’

***Book:*** Creative Community Organizing: A guide to Rabble-Rousers, Activists, And Quiet Lovers of Justice (Berrett-Koehler, 2010)

***Principles of Community Organizing:***

1. Common Self-Interest (as participant or inactive opponent)
2. Advocate a positive and oppose a negative
3. Aim for simplicity
4. Resist casting people into stereotypes
5. Demonstrations is the best vehicle
6. Publicize the cost to all participants
7. ‘Laughter is therapeutic’
8. Don’t be a know it all
9. Power corrupts even if you were a victim before assuming power
10. Whom you know counts
11. A community leader and a community organizer is not the same
12. Never compromise with injustice

Obama as Community Organizer in Chief

Obama vs Sarah Palin

“I can bring this country together. I have a track record, starting from the days I moved to Chicago as a community organizer.” Barack Obama

“I guess a small-town mayor is sort of like a community organizer except that you have actual responsibilities.” Sarah Palin

What did Obama do as a community organizer?

--community organizing as a pathway to change through hope

-- Calumet Community Religious Conference (Jerry Kellman)

--Activities: Hired at 24 / Summer City Job for youth on the south side / Removal of asbestos from a housing project

What did Obama learn as a community organizer?
--Political Power must be the Answer: Harvard Law/Illinois Senate/US Senate/ President USA

Utility Cooperatives as basic community organizing

Holistic Christian Community Organizing

The Definition of Holistic Christian Community Development

The dedication of men and women of a local community who are driven with a passion for ‘jubilee’ justice to commit themselves to mobilizing the human resources of that community to improve the lives of the residents of that community spiritually, socially and economically through the Church (JLT).

John Perkins Principles of Holistic Christian Community Development

***Bio:*** Famous 3rd grade dropout and recipient of more than 7 honorary doctorates, author of more than a dozen books, and listed in Who is Who among Intellectuals in America

***Publications:*** Let Justice Roll Down, ***A Quiet Revolution***, etc…

**Principles of holistic Christian Community Organizing:** The Three R’s

1. Reconciliation --Human dignity
2. Relocation --Felt need (community organizing)
3. Redistribution --Empowering the oppressed

Transition: A call to Service

1. Biblical Examples
	1. Example of Christ (John 13: 15-18)
	It has never been any question that Christ was the master and the disciples his servants. But because of their proximity to Christ they could easily think they were above the rest. To focus on the importance of bondage, Christ Himself put on the mantle of a servant by washing the feet of his disciples.
	2. Example of Paul (Rom 1: 1, Phi 1: 1, Philemon 1)
	In spite of his fame, in spite of the admiration of his followers, being a servant or slave of Jesus Christ was Paul’s favorite title.
	3. Ray Stedman’s two volumes on the Gospel of Mark: 'The Ruler Who Served’ and ‘The Servant Who Ruled'
2. Biblical Method: The end does not justify the means! (2 Kings 9: 5 ... & Hos 1: 4)

If we are the servants of God, we are not free to define our own terms of service or to follow our own paths. Jehu who received God's very clear command to exterminate the house of Ahab had to endure the punishment of God because he did it to promote his own ambition and agenda.

# **Proposition: The Three R's of Holistic Christian Ministry**

So if we want to be true representatives of Christ in ministry we must be prepared to assume the mantle of servitude like the Master who blazed the path we are to follow.

The foundation of American education is based on the three R's: ***Reading, wRiting and aRithmetic***. These are basic and essential for any educational system.

I offer these three ***R's*** for a theology of service. Just as reading, writing and arithmetic are essential to basic education, I consider ***Reconciliation, Relocation and Redistribution*** in ministry and the practice of Christianity as essential to orthodoxy and the growth of the kingdom God on earth.

For each proposal, we will look at the theology and application of that aspect of theology in our life and ministry.

Reconciliation ... the indispensable message for an authentic Christian ministry

***A servant has no personal ideology of his own. He is the ambassador of his Master.***

‘Depi Nan Guinen, Neg rayi Neg' (Haitian Proverb)
 (From way back in our homeland in Africa, we hated each other)

We are called to be ambassadors of reconciliation and we will not be ready to serve our Master as long as we are not reconciled to Him and with each other.

The theology of reconciliation

The Reconciliation of man with God (2 Cor 5: 18-20)

*All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.*

*We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.*

The central theme of the Bible is redemption. Dr. W. Graham Scroggie described it as “The Unfolding Drama of Redemption”, a drama with many scenes but a single theme: ***redemption.***

Even before the fall, God in His great love and knowledge had already put in place a plan to redeem man from the consequences of sin.

At the heart of this plan is how to achieve the reconciliation of man with his Creator. As God had said to Adam, the wages of sin is death. To fulfill the requirements of this debt he gave his only son, Jesus Christ, to die for us and redeem us from death.

Having accomplished this task by his death and resurrection, Jesus Christ has made us his ambassadors with the task to promulgate this message around the world, both in our proclamation and in our lives.

The Reconciliation of man with man (1 John 4:20)

Throughout biblical history, it has always been easier to preach the gospel than to apply it in our own lives. It is not those who say Lord, Lord, Lord... but those who do the will of the Father who will inherit the kingdom of heaven.

The Apostle John stated clearly: 'how can you say you love God whom you have not seen and hate your brother whom you see. '

The need for reconciliation

The negative effect of prejudice (racism) to an authentic Christian ministry

When two Christians, two messengers of reconciliation, cannot agree on anything, it brings dishonor to the Master they pretend to serve. Too often we make a distinction between our spiritual life and our material behavior. The result of this dichotomy is injury to the cause of Christ.

The negative effect of prejudice (racism) in the church

Selfishness, pride and envy led to many church divisions. From the day Martin Luther said, 'I cannot, I will not, so help me God' to stand against the abuses of the Roman Catholic church, we can observe not only the growth of denominations but also countless separations inside our partner churches.

-Ex: Charles Wesley's dream where he was at the entrance of heaven with St. Peter at the gate. Wesley wanted to know if there were Methodists but inside St. Peter replied, no. Any Baptists? No. Any Pentecostals? No. Any Catholics? No. (If the dream was today if would possibly ask about The Covenant) Then he went to the gates of hell and asked the same questions of Lucifer who replied: Yes, there are Methodists and Baptists and Catholics and Pentecostals here in hell. Back to the gates of paradise he sought clarification of Saint Peter who told him that only Christians were in heaven.

The negative effect of prejudice (racism) on the mission fields

Racial prejudice as it continues to be practiced here in the United States even to this day has inflicted a death blow to world evangelization.

The missionaries exported their prejudice wherever they went. And Haiti is not an exception.

As a result, many of the African countries that had been evangelized during the 18th century chose communism in the 20th century. The revival taking place in South America is definitely not Anglo-Saxon; some even lean toward liberation theology.

The beauty of reconciliation (Acts 13: 1--)

The designation of the followers of Christ as Christians for the first time happened in the church of Antioch (Acts 11: 26) because they practiced reconciliation. Indeed, this is exactly what Christ had said: 'I give you a new commandment, that you love one another; as I have loved you, you also should have love for one another. By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love for each other (Jn 13-34-35).

The Antioch Church had no racial prejudice, no class distinction, no education or economics separation. Among the leaders they found Barnabas, an Orthodox Jew, Simeon was an African, there was a pagan named Lucius, Menahen was a nobleman of the house of Herod, and Saul (Paul) was an intellectual. As an authentic representation of the Church of Jesus Christ should be.

When are we truly reconciled?

This is the question we must ask ourselves. We are not born reconciled.

Ex: Andy Young vs Nixon and Kennedy: The need for repentance

Ex: The Rabbi and his followers: When has the transition from night to day taken place?

Ex: 'Remember the Titans’: Julius & Gerry

Relocation ... the best method to achieve an authentic Christian ministry

***A servant has no country of his own (earthly citizenship). He goes wherever his Master sends him.***

 Lao Tzu: “Go to the people. Live with them. Learn from them. Love them. Start with what they know. Build with what they have. But with the best leaders, when the work is done, the task accomplished, the people will say 'We have done this ourselves’.”

The incarnation of Christ is more than a theological issue but also a model for the worker who wants to be a true representative of Christ.

The theology of relocation

The human tendency (Phil 2: 1-4)

One of the key characteristics of man is *selfishness*. This has led us to adopt the customs of this world in the Christian community; and even worse, to port that concept into the service of God. Our vision is for our own kin; always bigger and larger, more money, and better jobs. We want to insure our security and that of our loved ones here on earth. And very often the field where God has called us to work is not a place where these opportunities exist.

Too often we find shepherds who abandon their flocks for five of the seven days of the week as they are in the city with their families and only in the service of their Master over the weekend. In many cases we abandon our congregations on the field of battle for greener pastures while we want to remain the ‘bishop’ from long distance.

Paul invites us to rid ourselves of selfishness and transform our mind into the image of Christ.

The mind of Christ (Philippians 2: 5-10)

What Paul asks us to do is not a simple adherence to a "dogma" but a very tangible way of transforming our approach to service, our entire perception of what is important, our way of thinking, our theology and philosophy of ministry.

Phi 2: 5: In your relationships with one another, have the same **mindset** as Christ Jesus / τοῦτο γὰρ **φρονείσθω** ἐν ὑμῖν ὃ καὶ ἐν Χριστῷ Ιησοῦ)

Definition: *Phrénes* was regarded as the seat of intellectual and spiritual activity. .. It precisely refers to the ability not only to think, but also to control one's thoughts and attitudes. It is the heart as the seat of passions as well as the mind as the seat of mental faculties (Dr. Spiros Zodhiates)

“The point here is, that he left a state of inexpressible glory, and took upon him the most humble form of humanity, and performed the most lowly offices, that he might benefit us” (Barnes)

What are the characteristics of the mind of Christ?

-His position of exaltation that none of us will ever achieve

-A degradation that none of us can ever understand

-'Why did he not send an angel or archangel for this mission?

- Can we do better?

The advantages of relocation

'Felt Need' or total identification with the needs of the community

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are--yet he did not sin. (Heb. 4: 15)

If the Almighty God has deemed it necessary to incarnate among us in order to save us, how much more for us, his weak creatures, must we integrate ourselves in the field where he has called us.

Indispensable bridge for successful ministries

Even in ministry there is a certain distrust of the unknown. Our actions often speak louder than our words.

Ex: My grade school in St Michel vs L’Exode in of Fond-des-Blancs

Redistribution ... The tangible demonstration of an authentic Christian ministry

***A servant has no possessions of his own. He is the manager of the property of his Master.***

"All that I am and all that I hope to be, I owe it all to Him" Andrea Crouch

***To be as close as possible to the image of God, each person must own a piece of God’s creation to manage for His Kingdom***.

The imperatives of creation: ***Let us make man...***

1. Image –Reconciliation/dignity
2. Multiply –Relocation/social
3. Dominion –Redistribution/justice

The theology of redistribution

The absolute right of God on the universe (Psalm 24: 1)

There are three economic systems: capitalism, socialism and communism. The United States is the largest promoter of capitalism. The premise of capitalism is that what I have is mine; I earned it by the sweat of my brow and you can achieve as much if you work as hard as me.

This premise is radically contrary to that of God who declares that 'The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it; for he founded it on the seas and established it on the waters.’

 The management rights of man over creation (Gen 1: 26)

What the Creator of the universe has given us is the right to manage His creation. He put his image in us', He commanded us to multiply and replenish the earth, and He gave us DOMINION on this creation.

 Jubilee Theocracy (Lev 25:10)

This concept of God’s absolute right of ownership over all creation was central to the theocracy of the Old Testament. Upon their arrival in Canaan, God divided the country into tribes and established the boundaries of the land for each family. Then He established guidelines that would prevent the fall of his children into perpetual poverty.

First, He established the weekly Sabbath to give rest to his children.

Second, He established the annual Sabbath which takes place every seventh year to give rest to the land.

Third, He established the Jubilee every forty ninth year to ensure that no children of Israel would remain in perpetual poverty. The purpose of the Jubilee was to return all property lost during the preceding forty nine years to the original owners. The children of Israel could only lease his piece of land until Jubilee.

Unfortunately, the children of Israel did not observe the Annual Sabbath and it is extremely doubtful if they ever observed the Jubilee although the idea of this restriction on property ownership was evident in the case of Naboth and Jezebel. Daniel concluded that the children of Israel went into captivity for seventy years because they did not observe the Sabbath year for 490 years and God sent them into captivity to give rest to the land. (2 Chronicles 36:21, Leviticus 26:35, Jeremiah 25:9-11)

The divine mandate for redistribution (2 Cor 8: 12-15)

It's easy to say that we are no longer under the law and its economic requirements but under grace. But the New Testament is also very demanding. Economically, Paul insisted that there should be equality in the family of Christ and to make the point he compares this requirement to the distribution of the manna in the Old Testament.

The benefits of redistribution

 Celebration of Justice

For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. 1 Timothy 6: 10

Listen, my dear brothers and sisters: 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 to those who love him?

But you have dishonored the poor. Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court?

Are they not the ones who are blaspheming the noble name of him to whom you belong? Jas 2: 5-7

Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness. Jas 3:18

The plan of God in both the spiritual realm and the material realm is self-sufficiency.

 The growth of the work of God

The growth of the believer in the spiritual domain

In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! Heb. 5: 12

Self-sufficiency of the poor in the economic field

Expanding mission fields.

# CONCLUSION

If we want to serve our God faithfully, we must begin to reconcile ourselves with Him and with his people and to learn to distinguish between who is the Master and who is the servant.