

# “I Recommend to You My Beloved Poor ...”

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The effectiveness of transformation comes down not to theory, principals, or tools, but to people. Transformation is about transforming relationships, and relationships are transformed by people. Techniques and programmes only fulfil their promise when holistic people use them with the right attitude, the right mindset. When development promoters have made the theory and values of transformation their own, when they live them out in the real world of development practice, then good things can happen.

## ض Our Attitude in Serving the Poor جیں

Our attitude should be:

- 1. Be a good neighbour.** The requirement that we have the attitude of a good neighbour has its roots in the commandment that we are to love God and our neighbour. We have to be nice to people but we need more: being a good neighbour requires our willingness to change who we are.
- 2. Be patient.** Take as much time as it takes. Development does not work on a timetable. Remember that God is willing to walk at three miles an hour because that is the best that human beings can do.
- 3. Be humble before the facts.** We do not know as much as we wish we did. The other person always knows more than we expect. Besides, we are both going to have to change our minds on things, anyway, as soon as new facts emerge.
- 4. Everyone is learning.** It is obvious that without learning no transformation is taking place. Sometimes we forget, however, that if everyone – the poor and the non poor – is not learning then only limited transformation is taking place.
- 5. Everyone is holy.** We need to show respect for the poor. After all, God was in the community before us, working there since the beginning of time.
- 6. Every moment and every action is potentially transforming.** We will never know what God

uses for change until He does it. Everything we do carries a message. The only question is what that message is. Every action can heal or harm. In this sense, every action is a silent offering to God, a potentially transforming moment. Ravi Jayakaran asked the people of the village: "What is the most important change?" An older man said, "You are sitting on the same mat, looking me in the eye, and talking to us as equals. That's the biggest change." Sharing the same mat had more transformative power than digging the well or repairing the school.

**7. Love the people, not the programme.** We are here to serve people, not programmes. Donors sometimes create environments in which we forget this basic fact.

**8. Love the Churches too.** People in Church are one family. They are there for our well-being as well as for the well-being of the community. God has put gifts in these local communities of faith that are for the whole community, and they need to be identified and developed.

**9. Cultivate a repentant spirit.** We will make mistakes. We will do things we will regret. Part of loving our neighbours includes the willingness to go to them and repent of our mistakes and seek their forgiveness. Nothing removes the mystery surrounding our service as well as a repentant spirit that shows that we are accountable to God and to those whom we seek to serve.

**10. Act like dependent people.** We need to show daily that we are a people who are dependent on God and not on our skills, our development technology or our financial resources. People will see for themselves in whom we most truly place our trust. We need to be sure that our actions and our lives communicate that our trust is in the God of the Bible and nowhere else.

**11. Whose reality counts?** We must guard daily against the power of our education and experience. There is always a temptation to assume our view of reality is correct in a way that adds to the poverty of the poor.

## ص Characteristics of our Service to the Poor ض

### 1. Being Christian گ

**We must love** God with all our heart, mind, soul and spirit and we must love our neighbour as ourselves. We must understand that God's role extends to all of life, our relationship with God, ourselves, our neighbour, our environment.

**We must be committed** to being obedient to God's call to live out that rule in all areas of life.

**We must understand** that bias of the Gospel in favour of the lost, the poor, the forgotten, the ignored and the exploited.

**We must live** lives that announce the best news that we have, that living transformation is made possible by belief in Jesus Christ.

**We must have a passion** for developing a truly Biblical worldview, in ourselves and in others. This means to work hard to recreate a genuinely Biblical worldview that is truly holistic, including the supernatural and all that is good in modern science.

**We must maintain** a clarity of mission at the same time that we love people as they are and appreciate their culture. We need to be able to begin where people are without forgetting who we are and our purpose for being among them.

**We must be part** of the Body of Christ by being a living part of the local Church. A Christian apart from the Church is ultimately a contradiction in terms. Christians are by definition a people, made

in the image of God, who is a relationship of Three-In-One.

## 2. Having a Christian character گ

**We must have** a love for the poor and a call to serve them especially those on society's margin.

**We must be able** to see the image of God in even the most desperate or despicable of human beings and believe that this image is the truth about this person.

**We must believe** that God has given gifts to the poor that can be called out and used by the poor for their own transformation.

**We must have a passion** for helping people, both poor and non-poor, recover their true identity and discover their true vocation.

**We must believe** that the poor are entitled to the same voice and dignity we wish for ourselves.

**We must believe** that, when all is said and done, poor people have as much potential and can be as effective as any other human beings.

**We must live** like Christians. We must be reliable and honest, demonstrating the fruit of the Spirit.

**We must believe** in the transformative power of good relationships and seek to become friends with those we serve.

We must be transparent, ever willing to speak of our strengths and our weaknesses, always bearing witness to God as the source of our strengths and the means by which our weaknesses are forgiven and overcome.

**We must live simply**, openly and invitingly, creating no barriers to being a good neighbour or living an eloquent life.

**We must act** like Christians, having that genuine humility that being in Christ allows.

**We need** the balanced humility that affirms the worth and gifts that God has given us and also claims the weaknesses and sin that work to undermine our Christian life.

**We need a humility** that allows us to set aside all we know, save our knowledge of Christ, so that in **our weakness the poor may find strength. (1 Cor 2:1-3)**

**We must understand** ourselves as stewards of the gifts God has given us, stewards of our relationship with the poor, stewards for the resources we bring to the community and that the community already has.

## 3. Being open گ

**We need to develop** a deep understanding of the complexity of poverty and its many dimensions and expressions.

**We need to be able** to use the lessons of the social sciences and of Scripture to understand the causes of poverty: material, spiritual, cultural and socio-political.

**We need to be able** to develop sophisticated understandings of the local socio-political-religious context and how this context works for and against the well-being of the poor. All of this needs to be done with the profound understanding that the community understands its reality in ways that are often deeper and more accurate than those of any outsider.

**We need to learn** from the community and to take its indigenous knowledge seriously. This is where a truly Christian character is so important. We come with gifts God gave us to add to the gifts God has already placed in the community; there is no room for superiority or pride.

**We need to develop** skills for working with communities in ways that empower and liberate.

**We need to learn** how to learn what the community already knows.

**We need to understand** the basics of community-based health care, sustainable agriculture, water management, micro-enterprise development.

**We need to understand** how the community understand cause and effect and how to help the community move from its traditional and/or modern worldview towards a more Biblical one.

**We are called** to serve but not with pride. Everything we have, we have been given. Every transformation is an act of God, especially our own transformation. We must always remember that we are the servants of the Master.

**4. Always learning** گے

**We must know** that we do not know all they need to know.

**We must be** learners who are always seeking new insights from Scripture and from the community.

**We must be** people who document, who ask questions, who listen to the stories of the people and who spend time with the people in reflection. There must be a passion for discovering meaning. What have we learned? What worked? What did not? What did we miss? What is God saying to us in all this?

**5. Knowing who we are** گے

**We need** to become conscious of our assumptions about the poor, about poverty and why poverty exists.

**We need** to discover what we are working for. What is our goal? Are we ourselves seeking what we wish the poor to seek? Are we on the same journey, or are we really imposing our story on others? (1 Cor 1:11)

**We need** to examine our deepest motivations. Whose needs are we serving when we serve the poor? There is undoubtedly more than one answer to these difficult questions.

**6. Being disciples** گے

**We must know** the truth of God and the truth contained in God’s Word.

**We must also know** the power of God, the power that is greater than our temptations and greater than the power of evil.

**We must know** the love of God in the real world of space and time, with God as part of the explanation, and the important work of ethics and moral choices. The truth of God must become the justice and peace of God in the real world of our relationships.

**We must know** that since discipleship is about crossing our own transformational frontiers, we need to determine where these frontiers are. We can identify our transformational frontiers by comparing the seven deadly sins with the qualities Jesus celebrates in the Sermon on the Mount:

Seven Deadly Sins		Sermon on the Mount	
Pride	Self-assertion	Poverty of Spirit	Self-giving
Avarice	To have	Mercy	To give
Envy	Resents another’s happiness	Mourning	Share another’s happiness
Wrath	Destructive	Meekness and peace making	Saves and preserves
Sloth	Refuses to exert will towards good	Hunger and thirst for righteousness	Exerts will towards good
Lust	Dissipates and divides the soul	Purity of heart	Unifies the soul towards God
Gluttony	Consumes the world’s things	Being persecuted	Accepts being deprived of the world’s things

Each of us has to die to ourselves in order to be alive in Christ. Getting to Easter Sunday always requires living through Good Friday, at least in Kingdom business. Technical power can come from good training and good experience. Spiritual power comes only this harder way.

In the service of the poor we have two sources of help: the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. The Holy Spirit is the agent of discipleship and the Bible is the unique and unusual book that reads us, even when we think we are reading it.

We need to give the living Word of God the freedom to have the final say. We need to live with the expectation that the Gospel will never be exhausted, that there is always more if we are humble enough to be silent before the text time to time.

## پ Pray with the Beatitudes

***Blessed are the poor ...*** not of money  
but those who have a heart free from ties.

***Blessed are those who cry ...*** not those who groan  
but those who raise their voices.

***Blessed are the meek ...*** not the weak  
but those who are patient and tolerant.

***Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice ...*** not those who complain  
but those who fight

***Blessed are the merciful ...*** not those who forget  
but those who forgive.

***Blessed are the pure of heart ...*** not those who behave like angels  
but those who live transparent lives.

***Blessed are the peacemakers ...*** not those who avoid conflicts  
but those who face them honestly.

***Blessed are those who are persecuted in the cause of justice ...*** not because they suffer  
but because they love.

When the Son of Man comes in His glory, escorted by all the angels, then he will take his seat on the throne of glory.

All the nations will be assembled before him and he will separate men one from another as the shepherd separates sheep from goats. He will place the sheep on his right hand and the goats on his left. Then the King will say to those on his right hand,

**“Come, you whom my father has blessed, take for your heritage the Kingdom prepared for you since the foundation of the world.**

**For I was hungry and you gave me food;**

**I was thirsty and you gave me drink;**

**I was a stranger and you made me welcome;**

**I was naked and you clothed me;**

**I was sick and you visited me;**

**I was in prison and you came to see to see me.”**

Then the virtuous will say to him in reply, “Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you; or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and make you welcome? Naked and clothe you; sick or in prison and go to see you?”

And the King will answer,

**“I tell you solemnly, in so far as you did this to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me.”**

Next he will say to those on his left hand, “Go away from me, with your curse upon you, to the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you never gave me food; I was thirsty and you never gave me anything to drink; I was a stranger and you never made me welcome, naked and you clothed me, sick and in prison and you never visited me.”

Then it will be their turn to ask, “Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty, a stranger or naked, sick or in prison, and did not come to your help?”

Then he will answer, “I tell you solemnly, in so far as you neglected to do this to one of the least of these, you neglected to do it to me.”

And they will go away to eternal punishment, and the virtuous to eternal life.

*Mt 25:31-46*