

# ***Missio Dei, Being Jesus, and Kingdom Work:*** **A Modest Proposal Regarding Social Justice and Holistic Ministry**

## **Introduction**

If, as I argued in the previous workshop, the current foundations for holistic ministry are flawed, should believers be involved in social justice or holistic ministry? If so, why and how should they? This workshop will clarify certain misunderstood issues and offer direction that will serve as a starting point in forming a more comprehensive and consistently biblical approach to social justice and holistic ministry. This will allow for a more careful and sustainable foundation for holistic ministry.

None of the criticism of common foundations holistic ministry should be construed as signaling an antagonism for a holistic understanding of ministry. It is intended to show that the common approaches do not provide a solid foundation on which to build a ministry that is holistic, but not to discard the concept of holistic ministry altogether.

It is certainly easier to critique the arguments of others than to offer an acceptable alternative. But it is also less beneficial. Therefore, in this workshop I will set forth what I call a modest proposal of a way forward. I refer to it as a modest proposal for two reasons. First, I have no delusions that the limited thoughts set forth here will be sufficient for forming a comprehensive approach to understanding the mission of the church, her relation to society and culture, the nature and role of good works, etc. Rather, my goal is to point toward a clarification of certain misunderstood issues and to offer some direction that will enable others to form a more comprehensive and consistently biblical approach. Second, I deem it modest in that this proposal is probably less enticing than the foundations of the previous workshop. It is not a call to accomplish what Jesus did, or an invitation to join God on His mission to transform the universe, or a summons to extend God's reign over all of society or serve as signs of the presence of the kingdom breaking into the world. Rather, it is a call to faithfully follow and serve God in the all the ways He has specifically called us to serve. But what it lacks in excitement I trust it compensates for in Scriptural support and long-term sustainability.<sup>1</sup>

## **The Church's Relationship to Society**

Most Christians recognize that the New Testament establishes a measure of separation between the church and the state, though there may be disagreement as to the extent of that separation. However, it is clear that in Jesus' statement "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" he was recognizing two separate spheres in the present world (Mark 12:17).<sup>2</sup> There were certain parts of life that fell into the realm of human government as established by God and other parts of life that belonged exclusively to God. In most discussions of holistic ministry, this distinction is minimized or dismissed altogether. It is considered dualistic to speak of secular and sacred realms because everything has been consumed under God's reign. That God rules over every realm of life is not disputed. The real issue is whether or not He rules over every area of life in the same way. The Scripture seems to

---

<sup>1</sup>Of course, the reader will have to determine whether or not I have been successful in my endeavor.

<sup>2</sup>All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the *ESV*, 2001.

point to certain tasks that God has given to government (and other institutions) that He has not given to the church, and vice versa. The church does not carry the sword that God has given to government (Rom 13:4), nor does the government carry the task of administering church discipline (1 Cor 5–6).

In this area, I find the two-kingdom theology a helpful starting point.<sup>3</sup> In the Noahic Covenant, God established a common kingdom or sphere to provide a natural order for all humanity in which they can pursue normal cultural activities (as opposed to religious ones such as worship and devotion).<sup>4</sup> In the Abrahamic Covenant, God established a redeemed people or kingdom for His name's sake. Whereas the Noahic Covenant deals with ordinary cultural activities for the common human race to preserve the natural and social order while the earth remains, the Abrahamic Covenant deals with religious faith and worship for a holy and distinct people to bestow the benefits of salvation for eternity.<sup>5</sup> During Abraham's life, he lived as a citizen of both kingdoms, functioning normally in culture at large but worshipping in a distinct way. As a sojourner, he was waiting for God to fulfill His promise.<sup>6</sup> With the establishment of the Mosaic Covenant, these two kingdoms were merged into one for those living in Israel, so that both cultural activity and worship were to be distinct from the world at large and part of one's service to God.<sup>7</sup> The Israelites were no longer sojourners in the land, and every area of life was regulated by the Mosaic Covenant. No longer were they to interact on an equal plane with those in the land.<sup>8</sup>

However, when they interacted with those outside the borders of the land or when they themselves were displaced from the land, they reverted back to a two-kingdom approach. They were to wage war differently between cities inside the land and those outside the land (Dt 20:10–17). When the people were removed from the land and placed in Babylon, they were now to incorporate themselves into the larger cultural life of the city and seek its welfare (Jer 29), which was a reversion to practices under the Noahic and Abrahamic Covenants (cf. Dt 23:6, where Israel is told not to seek the prosperity of the inhabitants of the land). However, they were still citizens of two-kingdoms, for their religious practice was to be centered on God and His promise of restoration (Jer 29:11–13).<sup>9</sup> Once again they lived as sojourners in a foreign land. However, when they returned to the land in Ezra, they were again forbidden to seek the prosperity of those in the land (9:12). The reason for these different commands was that this earthly reign, the union

---

<sup>3</sup>For a history of two-kingdom approaches vs. one-kingdom approaches, see David VanDrunen, *Natural Law and the Two Kingdoms: A Study in the Development of Reformed Social Thought* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010).

<sup>4</sup>David Van Drunen, *Living in God's Two Kingdoms: A Biblical Vision for Christianity and Culture* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), p. 79.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., pp. 82-83.

<sup>6</sup>Jason J. Stellman, *Dual Citizens: Worship and Life Between the Already and the Not Yet* (Orlando, FL: Reformation Trust, 2009), p. xxi.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. xx

<sup>8</sup>Non-Israelites continued to live within the common kingdom, since the Mosaic Covenant was only for the nation of Israel.

<sup>9</sup>VanDrunen, *Living in God's Two Kingdoms*, pp. 92–94.

of cultural and religious activity, depended on a geographic location or distinct land where God's people lived.<sup>10</sup> In the New Testament, believers are not grounded in a geographic location, but are called to be sojourners, waiting for the fulfillment of God's promises while living within the common culture of their day (Heb 11; 1 Pet 2:11).

This understanding of two-kingdoms helps believers recognize the nature of their cultural engagement. They do not establish God's reign through their engagement, nor do they restore or redeem creation. They are not called to accomplish the task that Adam failed to do—to live in perfect obedience, including subduing the earth, in order to enjoy the world to come—but to enjoy the benefits of Christ's accomplishing Adam's task.<sup>11</sup> Believers engage in cultural activities, such as work, art, ecology, etc., as part of common humanity and to demonstrate a godly life as a consequence of what Christ already accomplished on their behalf.<sup>12</sup> The reality of two-kingdoms does not mean that believers divorce their Christianity from their cultural pursuits. Though being Christian does not provide the foundation for engaging in cultural activities such as government, marriage, and work, it does alter the manner in which believers engage in them (Eph 5–6, Col 3–4).<sup>13</sup>

### **The Church's Unique Role in the World**

Once one recognizes the existence of the two-kingdoms, then it is necessary to consider what tasks are unique to the sphere of God's redeemed people constituted in the present age in the church. Though many things in life are common to all mankind, the distinctions between the Christian and the non-Christian in this present age center on the church. Thus, the unique role of the church is to be found in the explicit commands of Scripture given to the church.

Since the church is not tied to any physical institution or corporation, it is not designed to establish governments or to create policies for society.<sup>14</sup> Rather, the church has been granted ministerial authority to present and promote what God has said. The church's role is to uphold what God has said in His Word to govern His people, not to create their own laws.<sup>15</sup> The church will function best in the world when it limits its ministry to activities explicitly tied to the tasks it has been given in Scripture. Nowhere in Scripture is the church called to provide universal education or health care. It is not given the task of stimulating the economy to provide employment for all people, nor is it called to judge criminal or civil disputes.<sup>16</sup> All of these are

---

<sup>10</sup>Stelman, *Dual Citizens*, pp.xxii–xxiv.

<sup>11</sup>VanDrunen, *Living in God's Two Kingdoms*, p.56–58. VanDrunen's point that a Protestant understanding of justification is incompatible with the concept that believers are to take up Adam's task to restore creation is intriguing. Just as Jesus accomplished everything for our salvation by obeying where Adam failed, he also accomplished everything for the redemption of the world by obeying where Adam failed. And in both situations, obedience comes as a result of what has been accomplished: "We pursue cultural activity in response to the fact that the new creation has already been achieved, not in order to contribute to its achievement." p. 57

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 62.

<sup>13</sup>Stelman, *Dual Citizens*, p. xxvi.

<sup>14</sup>VanDrunen, *Living in God's Two Kingdoms*, pp. 146–47.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., pp. 151–52.

easily carried out within the structures of society that are common to all mankind. Rather, the church's role is focused on worship, discipleship, fellowship, and evangelism. These are areas that are unique to God's redeemed people, and the world at large cannot share in them.

To say that the church should focus on its unique role in society does not mean that nothing else in life matters. While the church does not directly bear the responsibility of shaping society at large, it is intended to equip its members to function in society in ways that honor God. Through its discipleship ministries, the church can help believers live in the culture with completely different motivations and, at times, different activities. For example, a Christian assembly line worker will not necessarily perform different tasks on his job than a non-Christian. Both are called to work diligently and correctly. But the Christian does not do his job simply to earn money, to further his career, or to please his employers. He ultimately works "as for the Lord and not for men" because he is "serving the Lord Christ" (Col 3:23–24). The church does not fulfill his job for him on the assembly line, but it should help him to understand his motivations for doing what he does and call him to do it for God's glory. The church functions in a similar realm in other areas of society.

The church's worship and fellowship are other key areas that the unbelieving world does not participate in. The gathering of the church for worship and fellowship is not merely a means of equipping people to go out and do the real Christian work in the world at large but is a crucial task to be done for God's glory regardless of the world at large—they are not means to an end but an end in themselves.<sup>17</sup> The corporate life of the church is not secondary to God's work in the world, but is central to it.

However, the church does have a unique responsibility to the world at large to proclaim the gospel. Unbelievers may share in tasks of improving society, but they do not share in the task of verbal proclamation. The church must never lose sight of its call to be a means of being a blessing to the nations through calling all people to follow in the faith of Abraham (Gen 12:3; Gal 3:7–9). The church must fulfill its task of communicating the good news of Jesus Christ, forming new communities of believers, and communicating how to live out the implications of the gospel.<sup>18</sup>

### **Distinction Between the Church and Individual Believers**

One of the crucial points in this discussion is the distinction between the church *qua* church and individual Christians. Though the church is a group of believers, the church is not identical with believers.<sup>19</sup> Further, there are distinctions between the responsibilities given to

<sup>16</sup>An exception could be arbitrating civil disputes among believers (1 Cor 6).

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 132–33. Contra Wright's claim that "The pastor goes to church on Sunday to support the people in *their* ministry. And *their* ministry, the ministry that really counts as mission, is *outside* the walls of the church, in the world, being salt and light in the marketplace." Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God's People: A Biblical Theology of the Church's Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), p. 272, emphasis original.

<sup>18</sup>Eckhard J Schnabel, *Paul the Missionary: Realities, Strategies, and Methods* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), pp. 28–29.

<sup>19</sup>If a church was identical with believers, any time a group of believers happened to be together they would constitute a church—making a believing family a church, a Bible study a church, a Christian university a church, etc.

believers and responsibilities given to the church as church. For example, the church has the responsibility of overseeing the ordinances (baptism and the Lord's Supper), of administering church discipline, etc. Individual believers cannot take that responsibility on themselves. As well, individual believers have some responsibilities that the church does not fulfill. The church is not called to love my wife—I am. The church is not called to fulfill my responsibilities as an employee—I am. One passage that clearly shows this distinction in regards to mercy ministry is 1 Timothy 5:3–16. Paul points out that believing relatives are to care for needy widows in their family rather than the church, whereas the church has the responsibility to care for the widows who are truly in need. Thus, the responsibilities of the church and the responsibilities of believers are not co-extensive.

### **Priorities of Biblical Tasks**

The issue of priorities can be an unpopular one in relation to holistic ministry. The normal fear is that giving a task higher priority means that the tasks below it will be deemed unimportant or will be neglected. However, prioritization does not have to be an enemy of holistic ministry.

It is important to note that prioritization is a biblical practice. Jesus speaks in language of prioritization and importance when he refers to the greatest commandment and the second commandment (Matt 22:34–40). He also tells the Pharisees that they are neglecting the “weightier matters of the law” (Matt 23:23). To make these distinctions does not mean that the less important issues are unimportant or can be ignored, for Jesus also tells the Pharisees that they should have done both the greater and the lesser matters of the Law. It is surely biblical to recognize that God is more important than anything else, or that humans are more important than the rest of creation, without viewing any other thing as unimportant.

It is also crucial to note that the biblical teaching regarding doing good contains aspects of prioritization. Paul's command in Galatians 6:10 sets doing good to those in the church as more important than doing good outside of the church. In 1 Timothy 5:3–8 Paul touches on priority issues twice: verse four indicates that the responsibility to care for widows falls first at the feet of their children and grandchildren, and verse eight points out that believers have an even greater responsibility to care for those in their household than their relatives in general. Therefore, it is legitimate to state that needs in the church or in the family have priority to those outside.

Perhaps the greatest point of tension comes from considering evangelism as having priority over doing good. Yet the Bible is clear that eternal issues are more significant than temporal ones (e.g., Matt 16:24–25; Lk 12:4–5, 13–21). Granted, the importance of eternal matters does not necessarily give evangelism a place of priority. But it should certainly contribute to the discussion and help believers to recognize that eternal suffering is more significant than temporal suffering. Thus, their efforts to relieve eternal suffering may be more significant than their efforts to relieve temporal suffering.<sup>20</sup>

### **Distinguishing Between Obligation and Opportunity**

---

<sup>20</sup>The relationship between doing good and the gospel will be considered further below.

In a zeal to promote a holistic approach to ministry, some confuse opportunities with obligations. In other words, they fail to distinguish what believers *can* do in relationship to social involvement with what believers *must* do. In so doing, they unnecessarily bind the consciences of believers and overstep the authority given to the church.

Every believer has the obligation fulfill the Commission passages, but they may partake of various opportunities to do so—planting a church in their home country, training national pastors in another country, overseeing a congregation that sends out church planters, supporting those who are involved in church planting, etc. It would be wrong to take one of these opportunities and treat it as an obligation for all believers. Similarly, every believer has a responsibility to do good, but there are various opportunities for them to fulfill this responsibility: caring for an elderly parent or grandparent, volunteering at a homeless shelter, providing food or clothes for those in need, working with inner-city teens, adopting an orphan, doing yardwork for a neighbor who is physically disabled, etc. To try to convince believers that one particular expression of doing good is necessary when it is not delineated as such in Scripture is to abuse God’s people.

One of the dangers in advocating opportunities as though they were obligations is that it fails to consider how various circumstances may call for different responses. There may be times in which it is more important to seemingly “waste” resources in demonstrating love for God, while at other times it may be more important to use those resources to provide for the poor (Mark 14:3–9).<sup>21</sup> There may be other times when a response of mercy is called for rather than justice, or tough love must be demonstrated over kind love.<sup>22</sup> Rather than forcing particular expressions of Biblical principles as the only valid means of obedience, church leaders should help the believers in their ministry to understand the obligations that they have and urge them to find ways to demonstrate their obedience in those areas. They may help their people to become aware of different opportunities to live out the biblical injunctions, but they should never elevate particular activities as the only truly Christian response unless it is expressed clearly in Scripture.

### **Biblical Teaching on Doing Good**

In forming a more biblical approach to holistic ministry, it is vital to think through the believer’s responsibility to do good.<sup>23</sup> Two issues will be addressed here: the reasons for doing good, and relationship of doing good to the gospel.

#### *Reasons for Doing Good*

If the foundations listed earlier are inadequate, are there any reasons left for doing good?

---

<sup>21</sup>Charles C. Ryrie, *What You Should Know About Social Responsibility* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1982), pp. 52–53.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 31.

<sup>23</sup>For this discussion, the generic category of “doing good” would include things like social justice, deeds of mercy, meeting physical needs, contributing to society, etc. It refers to acts that are beneficial to others and are morally good.

The Bible actually presents several reasons for believers to do good works. The first and most obvious reason for believers to do good is obedience to God's commands. The Scriptures include commands to do good on multiple occasions (2 Cor 9:8; Gal 6:10; Eph 2:10; 2 Thess 3:13), therefore believers who want to obey God will seek to follow those commands.

The second reason for doing good is to glorify God by displaying His character. Matthew 5:16 and 1 Peter 2:10 explicitly tie the believer's good deeds to God's receiving glory. One of the main reasons God receives glory through the believer's good deeds is that it displays God's character. When believers do good to those who hate them, they are simply reflecting the character of their Father, who is "kind to the ungrateful and the evil," (Lk 6:35) and "makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matt 5:44). When they minister to those who cannot repay them, they are following in the footsteps of their Father who ministers to those who cannot repay Him (Lk 14:13–14; 21).

Another reason believers should do good is to love their neighbors. Jesus' commands to "love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt 22:39) and "whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them" (Matt 7:12) naturally lead believers to do what is beneficial for those God has providentially placed in their paths. Believers want to have their needs met, so they should be willing to help meet the needs of others. They ought to be willing to help others gain access to sufficient employment, for they would want others to offer them that opportunity. They usually desire safe neighborhoods and quality education for their children, so they should be willing to support those things for others. If believers began to take these commands of Jesus seriously, then they would naturally be involved in a holistic approach to ministry.<sup>24</sup>

Finally, doing good arises from the cultural mandate found in the Noahic Covenant.<sup>25</sup> Believers pursue justice in society as part of general humanity made in God's image. When given the opportunity, they endeavor to uphold God's universal standards of justice in government so that evil is punished and good is rewarded (Rom 13). These standards are part of God's moral law, written in the hearts of all people (Rom 2:14–15). They do not seek to force kingdom ethics on society at large but seek to uphold God's moral law that is intended for generic humanity. In so doing, they are honoring God's desire for society.<sup>26</sup>

### *Relationship of Doing Good to the Gospel*

Another common contention in the area of holistic ministry comes from the relationship that doing good has to the gospel.<sup>27</sup> Doing good is not the essence of the gospel, so that the

<sup>24</sup>By founding holistic ministry on a love for others the issue of wisdom in application is opened up. Sometimes, what is most loving for your neighbor is not what your neighbor wants or believes he or she needs. It also keeps the focus on eternal matters first and foremost, since the most loving thing a person can do is share the gospel with their neighbor.

<sup>25</sup>This mandate includes activities for the common human race to preserve the natural and social order while the earth remains.

<sup>26</sup>For a similar list of reasons, see Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert, *What is the Mission of the Church? Making Sense of Social Justice, Shalom, and the Great Commission* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), pp. 223–29.

<sup>27</sup>Though some speak primarily of the relationship of good deeds to evangelism, it is better to consider

concepts of individual sin, God's wrath, and personal justification are abandoned. Nor is it a replacement for the verbal proclamation of the gospel. Two possibilities for the relationship of doing good to the gospel that appear more helpful are 1) doing good is a means of gaining a hearing for the gospel—i.e., it is a means of gaining credibility; and 2) doing good is an outgrowth of the gospel—i.e., it is a means of adorning the gospel.

The suggestion that doing good is a way to gain a hearing is sometimes criticized as a bait-and-switch tactic.<sup>28</sup> There have surely been some who have used acts of mercy to lure people in, only later to spring the gospel on them. This attitude not only denigrates good deeds to the level of cheap marketing ploys but also degrades evangelism to little more than a sales pitch. However, the problem seems to lie more in a faulty understanding of gospel proclamation than in the role of good deeds. When the goal of evangelism is simply to induce decisions from the highest quantity possible, then anything related to it will necessarily be marred. A more biblical approach to evangelism would easily reduce the harm done by bait-and-switch tactics.

A more careful approach does not view good works as a means to lure people in but as a means of removing barriers to the proclamation of the gospel. Since evangelism is not a subversive act designed to build up the evangelist but is rather a supremely loving act intended for the eternal benefit of the other person, there are not ulterior motives for sharing the gospel after doing good. "It makes perfect sense to love someone by giving him food and at the same time to love him in a different, higher way by giving him the gospel. There's no bait-and-switch there; that's simply holistic compassion—compassion for the whole person, not just part of him."<sup>29</sup> Verses like Matthew 5:16 and 1 Peter 2:12 lend credence to this understanding.

However, a clarification is in order: to say that doing good is a way to gain a hearing does not mean that doing good is an essential element of evangelism or that it is the hidden key for conversions. If good deeds are an essential element of evangelism then evangelism cannot be accomplished apart from good deeds. However, there is no indication that Paul waited to preach the gospel in Athens until he had done some visible good in the city (Acts 17). Peter did not first minister to physical needs in Jerusalem before proclaiming Christ to them at Pentecost (Acts 2). Whether or not verbal proclamation of the gospel will be accompanied in any way by good deeds depends on several factors, including resources, abilities, location, etc. If it is possible to do evangelism that is not directly accompanied by doing good, then it is not essential for evangelism. To claim that no one will listen to the gospel unless they first see the preacher doing good is going beyond the biblical witness.

Also, good deeds are not the hidden key for effective evangelism. The social action of the early church is often pointed to as the reason the missionary efforts of the apostles were so effective.<sup>30</sup> However, the New Testament seems to point more closely to the power of the gospel through the working of the Holy Spirit as the reason for the gospel's advance (e.g., Acts 13:49; Rom 1:16; 1 Cor 1:18–2:16; 2 Cor 4:1–12). If doing good were the key to people's salvation, then surely Jesus would have seen much greater success. No one did more good than he did, but

---

them in light of the gospel itself.

<sup>28</sup>E.g., John Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World: What the Church Should Be Doing Now!* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1975), p. 26.

<sup>29</sup>DeYoung and Gilbert, *What is the Mission of the Church?*, p. 228.

<sup>30</sup>E.g., Wright, *The Mission of God's People*, pp. 146–47.

the majority of people rejected him. Doing good does not necessarily make the gospel more believable, which is why I wonder if the idea of credibility is the most beneficial.<sup>31</sup> Good deeds may cause others to be willing to listen to the message, but only the Spirit can make them believe it.<sup>32</sup>

Perhaps a better way to understand the relationship between doing good and the gospel is that good deeds are the outgrowth of a life transformed by the gospel. Therefore, doing good is a means of adorning the gospel. Titus 2 teaches that the lives of believers can “adorn the doctrine of God our Savior” (2:10). Good deeds help show the beauty of the gospel because they point to its life-changing power. However, that does not mean that believers only do good to make the gospel attractive to unbelievers. Since their good deeds are the result of a changed life, they do them regardless of the response of unbelievers. They do good because they love the gospel of Jesus Christ and want to display its splendor in their lives.<sup>33</sup>

### **Conclusion**

As an alternative to current approaches, the two-kingdom approach appears to be a more biblical starting point for a consideration of holistic ministry. It recognizes that believers live as sojourners, citizens of both the common kingdom of humanity and of God’s redemptive kingdom. They should not seek to extend the authority of the church beyond its Scriptural boundaries. Christians seek to implement biblical priorities in their approaches to holistic ministry, and do not treat opportunities for service as obligations from Scripture. However, they do good for all of the reasons laid out in Scripture, seeking to adorn the gospel of Jesus Christ.

If the goal is to get churches to take a more holistic approach to ministry, does it really matter what basis is given? If the end result is the same, why even quibble over minor distinctions? A simple answer is that theology matters. God does not merely want His people to act in certain ways, but to think in certain ways. Therefore, our basis should be as biblical as we can make it.

However, another reason is that a faulty foundation will not be able to sustain holistic ministry long-term. Either believers will begin to abandon key Scriptural tenets such as the significance of individual sin, the uniqueness of Christ’s ministry, the reality of future judgment, and the glories of the coming kingdom. Or, they will be disillusioned as they are unable to effectively redeem society, restore the universe, or complete Jesus’ mission. But, if they are able to see holistic ministry as a means of obeying and glorifying God, of loving their neighbor, and of participating in the common culture, then they can adopt a more realistic and biblical attitude that can sustain holistic ministry in the long run.

---

<sup>31</sup>Some argue that good deeds do not give credibility to the message of the gospel but to the messenger of the gospel. There is certainly wisdom in this approach. However, this can still communicate the idea that people will be more likely to accept the message of the gospel if they think the messenger is credible.

<sup>32</sup>The idea that good works gives credibility to the gospel often reflects the concept that good deeds are signs of the presence of the kingdom. Thus, the earlier critique regarding good works as signs of the kingdom—that the “signs” that we do is not truly parallel to the “signs” that Jesus did—would apply equally here.

<sup>33</sup>Obviously, Christians should always want to see unbelievers saved, but the salvation of unbelievers is not the driving force behind all they do—the glory of God is.

Granted, this approach to holistic ministry may not seem as grand as others. It does not speak of changing the world, of transforming society, or of redeeming culture. Nor does it call believers to participate in every aspect of God's mission of cosmic restoration. But, a believer should take no greater joy than simply serving God in the way that God calls him to. If this approach to holistic ministry accurately reflects God's call, then it is grand indeed.

*Ben serves as the Director of Urban Ministry at Inter-City Baptist Church. He leads the evangelistic and discipleship efforts of the campus ministry team at Wayne State University and coordinates outreach into the Midtown area. He convinced a wonderful young lady, Jo, to move down from her beloved country to the north to be his wife.*