

Life in a Slum: Stepping into Living as Good News to Those Who Suffer

Intro : Most of you may have attended poverty track plenary session & have listen to my long story of slum life experiences. My family had lived in slums of Manila for 20 years & slums of Cambodia for 10 years. I have lots of experience on how to be good news to the poor. From leading small group Bible studies, to leading a local church & then lead a network of churches of Living Springs. In conjunction with my church, done various attempts in developing our slum community. Also I have minister to the poor in line with my spiritual gifts in training, discipleship & mentoring of Christian leaders in both in Manila & Cambodia.

Allow me to show you an amateur video shared while our community is on fire last August, as a kick off this seminar. To give you a bit what kind of context slum we are living.

Slide #2 : fire mp4

What did you think or feel after the video about slum life? (Pause a min)

In this seminar we will look at some principles & some stories how to be living the good news to the poor.

A good framework to start with: (slide # 3)

John Perkins framework will be a very useful tool we can use to reflect on this seminar. There are three types of people that can bring community transformation in a given context.

Relocators- not born in the neighborhood but move into the area to live incarnationally and tie their well -being to that of their neighbors.

These people can be foreign or local missionaries who choose to live in the community they want to serve.

Returners- those who were born and raised in the community and then left for a better life. They are no longer trapped by poverty of their neighborhood, yet they choose to return and live in the community they have tried to escape.

Refugees of war or calamities who have live out for a long time. When have an opportunity to come back, would do and help the community they have left. In Cambodia , I have worked with many of those people. They really become effective change agents. Their passion to serve is fueled by the hard experiences and the desire of alleviating the sufferings of others as well.

Remainers: they are the once who could have fled the problems of the community but have chosen to continue to living there incarnationally, becoming part of the solution to the surrounding problem.

In the Philippines: some co- pastors call me “incarcerated pastor in the slum” because I choose to remain. I am also surrounded by many co- workers who choose to stay/

remain to serve the community even if they have a chance to go up the ladder of society.(Danny & Rose,et.al) (we call ourselves Dream Team).In Cambodia : we call them people of peace(POP).

***I want to share my personal status on this framework:**

In Manila, we were challenged by those “relocators” from Servants , to minister to our fellow poor. Then we become “remainers” for quite a while , like the “people of peace” in Matthew 10:11. We do what we could to help transform our community. Then later accept a new challenge to be “relocators” in the slums of Cambodia.

And soon we will be “ returners or remainers” again if we will go back to Manila after 10 years overseas.

My experience taught me that the interaction of the three types of people inside the slum is a powerful way to bring Good news of Jesus & His transforming power. When relocators or returners comes to build relationships with remainers- “people of peace”, work alongside & empower them , then wholistic transformation of the slums begin to happen.

A better way to describe a glimpse of community transformation that can happen in the working together of the three is types of people in the framework is through this photo after the fire:

Slide #4(Pic after the fire) My teammate David for 9 years & 2 shorttermers + youth leaders that I am mentoring work together in the rehabilitation of the community.

Slums rising!

I was burdened by a big story that is fast unfolding in the world today. It seems like an irreversible trend & I think it is a reality we must face as people of God in this generation.

The growing urban slums all over the world is really overwhelming

(Allow me to read: Excerpt from a report)

Christianity 2014: Independent Christianity and Slum Dwellers(Source : Todd M. Johnson and Peter F. Crossing , Center for the Study of Global Christianity- Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary)

slide # 5

“For nearly thirty years we have reported on the urban poor and **urban slum dwellers** . The latter has grown from **260 million in 1970 to over 1 billion today**. This current figure is **approximately one in six people in the world**.

slide # 6

Unfortunately, **Christian involve- ment in slums is disappointingly small**. In his book *Slum Life Rising* (UNOH Publishing, 2012), Ash Barker states that even the largest Christian mission organization is devoting only around **7 percent of its budget to urban programs and less than 2 percent to slum ministry**.

slide # 7

In addition, we estimate that fewer than **1 in 500 Christian foreign missionaries works in slums**. A tiny fraction (*perhaps 1 in 10,000*) of national workers (*pastors, evangelists, and similar persons*) **work in slums in their own countries**.

The vast majority of Christians who do work in the slums live outside the slums. While many of these have effective ministry, the most promising work appears to be that of **incarnational teams living in the slums.**"

In the survey read, if we apply the statistics now in this room, I am probably one of that "one out of 500" missionary today!

That my burden on the report parallels our Bible verse in Matthew 9: 35-38, that reminded us of this huge challenge in front of us.

The workers are few my dear brothers & sisters. Pray that the Lord of the Harvest send out more workers in the field. Lets continue to pray for this burden!

Jesus also is saying: Come with me & make disciples of all nations. (Mt 28: 19-20)

How do we want respond to Jesus call to minister to the growing numbers of unreached people in the slums of the world?

How can you go? You can join others who have already made the sacrifices of leaving their comfort zones. And have embraced the difficult task of slum ministry.

There is a growing movement of workers/ missionaries in the slums or living among the poor in their own respective countries. We can join or work together or get connected with them to be inspired, in order that together we can do this huge task before us.

At this point I would like to highly recommend the book: The New Friars by Scott Bessenecker . It's a very good book for all you who are thinking about how to respond to Jesus call to minister among poor. It's good to read about stories of young people like you in the centuries past, in the early time of Friars as movement up to the present , 21st century Christians. Read to be challenged by the results of the pursuit of engaging the poor in their lives.

Slide #8 The New Friars

New Friars is one of the network of movement is compose of Servants to Asia's Urban Poor, Servant Partners, Urban Neighborhoods of Hope (UNOH), Word Made Flesh, & Inner Change.

Maybe we can add more like-minded groups like : Urban Expression in UK, Urban Vision in NZ, Waiters Union in Brisbane Australia ,and maybe there are more groups developing at the moment.

In the book New Friars gives us the common thread that tied up this new movement. I believe **with all my heart that following this principles or signs is a profound way**

to be living as good news to the poor.

(Slide #9)(enumerating the five signs of New Friars)

Incarnational,Missional,Marginal,Devotional,Communal

(Slide # 10)

1. Incarnational: relocating in the slums community

* living among the poor means you can see ,hear , smell , taste & experience everything what is to be poor.

- Be a learner – knowing & understanding culture & learning the language
Story: Sitting on a squat toilet (a funny/ humiliating story that can remind us that we always need to come into another culture as a learner.

*Living among the poor the way to build better relationship, understand them & then we work together for their transformation

- doing ministry with the poor – comes out of this relationships

Story: Appreciation of dog meat

(Slide # 11)

2.Missional- a mandate to bring God's "shalom" agenda to the slum neighborhood not only to save souls but bring the good news that would transform individuals, families, communities, as well as the structures and systems of human society and the environment.

Story: Are you communists?

(Slide #12)

3. Marginal –shift so that the poor becoming the center

- poor have something to offer to world if we trust & empower them, the poor we serve can become our teacher
- the poor become our partners in transformation agenda by allowing them to take the power back to themselves. One way to empower is to encourage them to ask question & be critically aware of issues in their lives.

Story: Doctor "water"

Slide #13

4.Devotional- we need total dependence on God in all aspects of slum life

*Slum life is very hard, we need to developed a healthy spirituality that can sustain us amidst the rigors of slum life.

- trusting God who loves the poor will meet you there

A God who promise:

I will be with you always -Matthew 28:20...as long as you can

I will give you rest Matt 11:28...when its hard & tiring

I will be with you, ever present in the midst suffering

I will bless you to be a blessing to others even in your vulnerability & weakness

Story: Lament, crying in the midst of suffering & injustice in my experience help me a lot, knowing God sees and will help in time. This is one of my anger management technique also.

Slide #14

5. Communal- work together in supportive teams

- inter-dependent with each other
- supporting & caring for each other
- allowing each one to graciously accept weaknesses & vulnerabilities
- give opportunity for each one to use & develop their gifts to achieve full potential

In our Servants team: work, eat , celebrate, cry , pray, worship , enjoy life together is good in regular rhythm

Communal - work with people not for them

- in supporting local initiatives
- allowing them control their journey to wholistic transformation

Story: drainage problem in our lane in Phum Kandal

Conclusion:

Please do something from what you hear from me today.

There are number of ways to respond:

Maybe some of you will be interested and read more – encourage you to engage with this – there are principles in this way of living that are relevant for Christians anywhere....

Some of you may be sparked to support others to do this through prayer and financial giving.

IVCF - Global Urban Trek , which we have hosted in Manila & Cambodia in recent years is a good opportunity for you.

You can visit Servants booth if you are interested for our 6 week mission internship coming soon in North India called: Reimagine. July- Aug next year.

There may be some of you, who already come from disadvantaged back ground may hear God's call to be returners or remainers with an incarnational ministry amongst those you come from.

Some of you.. I believe will continue to fan the spark that God places in your heart to be relocators... I encourage you to look to your own cities and find groups working among the poor there...

But I also encourage you to consider the urgent need to build Christian community among the many slums in poor countries across the world. The harvest is ready but the workers are few.

The call to relocate into a poor slum is not only reserved for radical, extra talented hero type people. In my experience it is often the ordinary Christian who passionately desires to accept this very challenging mandate for all of us.

Question & Answer : 30 mins

Recommended books:

The New Friars, by Scott Bessenecker .

Living Mission : The Vision & Voices of the New Friars edited by Scott Bessenecker

The Sounds of Worlds Colliding , edited by Kristin Jack.

Slum Life Rising: How to Enflesh Hope in the New Urban World by Ash Barker

(UNOH)

Servants Among the Poor , by Jennie Craig

Rubble to Redemption by Christian & Christine Schneider