



Dear Friends,

I really appreciated what Pastor Sam Hearn said on Sunday about reframing poverty and injustice – in terms of relationship.

The quote he gave us, from *When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty Without Hurting the Poor . . . and Yourself*, by Brian Fikkert and Steve Corbett, comes originally from work done by Bryant Myers, professor of transformational development in the School of Intercultural Studies at Fuller Theological Seminary. He writes:

***“Poverty is the result of relationships that do not work, that are not just, that are not for life, that are not harmonious or enjoyable. Poverty is the absence of shalom in all its meanings.”***

If we want to genuinely support people experiencing poverty (and acknowledge our own poverty - using the definition above) we need to be part of relationships that, using Sam’s diagram, “create trust and belonging,” “grow well-being” and empower one another to, “become agents of transformation”.

I loved another of the comments Sam made that – so often – our church ministries, shaped by a charity model where those with greater resources give to those with fewer resources, stay trapped in the top right-hand quadrant, “Welcome and Sow”. They never move on to allowing people to “Belong”, “Believe and Be Transformed” and “Multiply”.

*According to the authors of When Helping Hurts, Corbett and Fikkert, “Until we embrace our mutual brokenness, our work with low-income people is likely to do far more harm than good.... One of the biggest problems in many poverty-alleviation efforts is that their design and implementation exacerbates the poverty of being of the economically rich – their god complexes – and the poverty of being of the economically poor – their feelings of inferiority and shame.”*

The way in those with greater resources attempt to assist those with fewer resources impairs the theology that those who are poor are made in the image of God.

*“You always have the poor with you,”* Jesus said. Are we prepared to see the poor? Are we prepared to get to know the poor? Are we prepared to love them? And are we prepared to acknowledge our own poverty and seek to work with others in this ministry of reconciliation, in bringing about shalom?

*Grace and peace,*

*Belinda*