

A Smoldering Wick

IGNITING MISSIONS WORK WITH
SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES

by Gena Thomas



**JUSTICE
OR
CHARITY**

WHAT SHOULD
OUR FRAME-
WORK BE?

CH. 1-2

**YOU ARE
RICH AND
POOR**

WHY EVERY
HUMAN BEING
IS BOTH

CH. 4

**PARTICI-
PATORY
MISSIONS**

DEVELOPMENT
TOOLS ADAPTED
FOR MISSIONS

CH. 9

A close-up photograph of a hand holding a paintbrush, applying white paint to a wooden structure. The wood is dark brown and has a visible grain. The hand is wearing a blue and white patterned sleeve. The background is a dark, solid color.

Tzedakah

a life of right
relationship

“ We must make justice a lifestyle. Lifestyles are not formulaic, neither are relationships. We must first have a right relationship with the God of justice in order to mimic his ways in loving humanity.

Chapters one and two discuss the theological importance of understanding our framework in doing missions. When we look at missions work through the lens of charity (i.e. giving handouts as a social service alone) we unconsciously spread a toxic version of the gospel. But when we go back to the Old Testament and understand the Hebrew words for justice, we are able to see a whole new reason for why and how missions should be done. Practicing relational missions is not modernizing missions, it's foundational to the origins of missions.

YOU ARE RICH AND POOR

“When Christ talked about loving God, he tells us to do so with all of our hearts, souls, minds, and strengths. This outlines several dimensions of a human: emotional, psychological, mental, and physical (which includes health & finances). While many Americans are most often rich in the physical facets of life, we are, at times, poor in other facets.



We typically define the words *rich* and *poor* through one dimension: that which is physical, tangible, visible. But what if we started measuring wealth and poverty through the four dimensions of a human being? You may be rich in commodities, but do you have emotional wealth? You may see tangible poverty when you travel to developing countries, but often, when you look closely, you'll also find people who are rich in community in ways our depths long for. In fact, a study by Northwestern University in Chicago shows that community has the power to block genetic vulnerability to depression. We must remember in doing STM work that as Westerners, we come from countries with painfully high rates of depression and suicide. We have much to glean from our international brothers and sisters.



TYOLOGY OF PARTICIPATION

BY JULES PRETTY

ADAPTED BY GENA THOMAS IN A SMOLDERING WICK

MANIPULATIVE PARTICIPATION

Participation is simply a pretense, with people's representatives on official boards but who are unelected and have no power.



Sending church (SC) tells receiving church (RC) it plans to send a team to paint houses over the summer. SC asks RC to come up with a list of 10 people's houses they can paint. SC never asks RC if there are other needs within the community or if painting houses will address any need at all. They simply ask for the list and plan the trip accordingly. The pretense is that the RC is participating by choosing the 10 houses.

Are you involved in participatory missions? Examining your missions work in light of Jules Pretty's *Typology of Participation* will help you better understand where you are. Self-mobilization is the goal. (p. 253-258 in the book)

PARTICIPATION BY CONSULTATION



PASSIVE PARTICIPATION



PARTICIPATION FOR MATERIAL INCENTIVES



FUNCTIONAL PARTICIPATION



INTERACTIVE PARTICIPATION

People participate in joint analysis, development of action plans and formation or strengthening of local institutions. Participation is seen as a right, not just the means to achieve project goals. The process involves interdisciplinary methodologies that seek multiple perspectives and make use of systemic and structured learning processes. As groups take control over local decisions and determine how available resources are used, so they have a stake in maintaining structures or practices.



SC has invested in relationships with members of RC prior to STM trip. The two groups decided there is a sincere need for house painting among a group of church members. The two churches work together equally throughout the planning, implementing, and evaluating of this house-painting project. Together they determine who should get their house painted and why, so that when neighbors ask why they can't have their house painted, the locals have a good reason and jealousy is minimized.

PARTICIPATORY MISSIONS

Partnering in development in our STMs is a giant step toward international unity, and though it takes time to listen and create long-term relational credibility, that time invested is priceless.

SELF-MOBILIZATION

People participate by taking initiatives independently of external institutions to change systems. They develop contacts with external institutions for resources and technical advice they need, but retain control over how resources are used. Self-mobilization can spread if governments and NGOs provide an enabling framework of support. Such self-initiated mobilization may or may not challenge existing distributions of wealth and power.



A group of teenagers from the RC youth group have already started reaching out to the elderly in their congregation by painting their houses, usually painting 1-2 a weekend. SC already has a relationship with RC and has asked the youth pastor if they can send a team down to partner with this house-painting group.