

## TRANSFORMATION: THE RECONSTRUCTION MODEL

### STUDY 9: REBUILDING CITIES AND COMMUNITIES

#### The Disaster

The story of the fall of Jerusalem is told in 2 Kings 25, 2 Chronicles 36:15-20, Jeremiah, and Lamentations. There it is written that the city was completely destroyed and its people totally deserted it. The Babylonians followed this strategy...

1. They surrounded the city and attacked it daily.
2. They cut off all access so the inhabitants slowly starved to death.
3. When the king and army broke the cordon they chased and captured them. The king's sons were killed before his eyes. Then he was blinded, chained, and led prisoner to Babylon.
4. The temple, palace, houses and all important buildings were burned to the ground.
5. The walls of the city were broken down.
6. Nearly all the people were exiled to Babylon; only a few of the poorest were left to till the fields and tend the vineyards.
7. All the valuable temple treasures were taken to Babylon.
8. The community leaders were executed.
9. The Babylonians appointed a puppet ruler.
10. When the local ruler was assassinated all the people fled to avoid Babylonian punishment.

From 2 Kings chapter 25, note the verses which describe the above events. Jeremiah chapters 39-41 and 52 tell the same story in more detail.

#### The Reasons

Jerusalem was not destroyed just because of Babylon's strategy and strength. Jeremiah gives additional reasons. Read the following passages to discover why Jerusalem fell. A) Jeremiah 34:8-22, b) Jeremiah 35:15a, c) Jeremiah 35:15b, 44:3-6, d) Jeremiah 36, e) Jeremiah 27:1-2, 27:6-10, f) Jeremiah 38:14-28, g) Jeremiah 44:9-10.

#### The Results

There were three dimensions of disaster.

- 1) The City Was Destroyed. "How deserted was the city, once so full of people," laments the prophet (Lam. 1:1). All her wealth was taken away (Lam. 1:10), all her buildings destroyed (Lam. 2:2-9).
- 2) Many People Died. As well as the leader killed by the Babylonians, hundreds in Jerusalem died of famine (Lam. 4:9). Not even children were spared – they were eaten by their own mothers (Lam. 4:10).
- 3) The Survivors Despaired. There was no joy left in their hearts, no hope in their minds, no strength in their bodies, no faith in their spirits. They felt that God had abandoned them completely.

There were consequences too for the ones who destroyed Jerusalem, for the Lord in His justice judged Babylon and all who helped her, so that she became a haunt of jackals, more desolate than Jerusalem, beyond repair. (Jer. 46-51).

For Jerusalem, however, there was the promise of restoration (Jer 33, Jer. 50:19, 2 Chron. 36:21-23). Read the passages noted.

### The Reconstruction

Seventy years were to pass before a plan was taken up to rebuild Jerusalem and restore its glory, its people, and its functions as a commercial, political, and religious center. The rebuilding was done in two stages, with the altar and the temple built under the leadership of Zerubbabel (Ezra 1-4). The walls of Jerusalem were rebuilt according to a plan conceived and executed by Nehemiah (Neh. 1-6). While this was happening, Ezra the priest and Haggai and Zechariah the prophets, inspired the people in their work and led them in worship.

This study examines the philosophy and strategy motivating each of these relief and development efforts, and relates them to community development efforts, and relates them to community development philosophy.

#### 1) Zerubbabel's Building Plan – Ezra

##### 1). The key features in his program were:

- it was a government scheme sanctioned by the king himself (1:2-7)
- It was a community program (1:3-6, 2:68-69)
- it involved 50,000 people (2:64-65).
- it was well planned (3:2)
- it was carried out with courage and joy (3:36, 3:10-11)
- it had a food-for-work component (3:7)
- they met with much opposition (4:1-5).
- the work stopped because of official disapproval (4:4-24)
- the work was again officially approved (5:6-8).
- it took many years to complete (5:13-16).
- wages were paid by the government (6:9-10).
- local leadership and management were used (6:25).
- good records and accountability were maintained (8:20-34)

#### 2) Nehemiah's Reconstruction Scheme – Nehemiah

- it began with research (1:2-3, 2:12-15).
- it was motivated by compassion (1:4).
- it was surrounded by prayer (1:4-11, 2:4).
- it had a sound strategy (2:5-9, 4:13-23).
- it faced opposition from local oppressors (2:10-19, 4:1-11, 6:1-14, 6:17-19).
- the community was involved (2:17-18).
- the work was shared (3:4-15).
- some nobles wouldn't do manual work (3:4).
- the people worked enthusiastically (4:6).
- it was motivated by a concern for social justice (5:1-13, 8:10).
- Nehemiah demonstrated servant leadership (5:14-19).

- it was carried through with courage and persistence (6:3-13).
- it was blessed by God (6:15-16).
- leaders of integrity were appointed (7:1-2, 13:13).
- the work was dedicated to God (12:27-43).
- the purpose of the work was spoiled by self-interest (12:4-11).

### Development Programs Today

The examples of Zerubbabel, Ezra, Nehemiah highlight many key issues in community development. They formed a vision and defined a goal. They assessed the need and developed a strategy. They involved the people in the reconstruction process. They attacked the opposition which arose. They cooperated with national and local leaders. They surrounded their efforts with prayer and worship.

The remainder of this study reflects on these issues in community development.

1) The Vision and the Goal. First briefly state a vision and community development goal of your organization.

One of the successful community development programs in India is in Tamil Nadu where the Rural Unit for Health and Social Affairs (RUHSA) conducts programs among the 100,000 people of K.V. Kuppam Block, Vellore. They insist a development plan must be: 1) adoptable, 2) acceptable, 3) accessible, 4) adjustable, 5) accountable, and 6) appropriate.

State how your plans meet these criteria. Did Zerubbabel's, Ezra's, and Nehemiah's plans have these features? In what way?

2) The Need and the Strategy. The rebuilding of Jerusalem has some features of a disaster relief response and some characteristics of a community development program.

One disaster response training manual lists the following states of reaction among disaster victims:

- a) Denial. Even in natural disaster regions few people really expect anything to happen to them. They believe the myth of community or personal immunity, or are fatalistic.
- b) Anticipation. When a disaster is known to be approaching there is sometimes paralysis but most often frantic preparation to reduce expected losses and to secure property.
- c) Impact. When the disaster hits, people typically go through a sequence of: fear; a feeling of isolation; an illusion of centrality; a realization of the scope of the disaster; spreading and believing rumors of extensive damage; an increase of love; a surge of energy; a sense of difference from outsiders; a focus on loss of life, then of property.
- d) Aftermath. After the disaster has passed people may take some weeks or months to readjust. They are likely to express grief, or guilt if unaffected; to relive the experience or deny; to readjust; to criticize the helping agencies; and finally to rebuild. (Adapted from Disaster Response by John Bush, 1978, p. 129)

Which of these reactions did the people of Jerusalem experience? Discuss your ideas in the

group.

The procedural steps in a disaster-relief situation are:

1. Estimating the need by on-the-spot investigation.
2. Consulting all parties – community, government, other helping agencies.
3. Defining the target group.
4. Identifying clearly the organization's input.
5. Coordinating resources.
6. Mobilizing local Christian volunteers.
7. Involving the community.
8. Setting time schedules and objectives.
9. Ensuring accountability for money and goods.
10. Evaluating the program.
11. Withdrawing the organization and handing the work over to the community.
12. Moving from disaster relief to a community development approach. Tick any steps followed by Zerubbabel and Nehemiah. Are there things they did which are not mentioned on this list?

3) Involving the Community. Many development programs today realize like Nehemiah that the community itself is the key to successful community development and must be involved at all stages of planning on implementation. A diagram developed by the RUHSA, Tamil Nadu, India, places the community at the center of the development Process (Figure 9.1). To what extent is the community involved in the development projects you are involved in?

4 Dealing with Obstacles and Opposition. Arthur Simon of Bread for the World, which seeks to influence U.S. Government policy, identifies common obstacles to development. He says:

One internal obstacle to development is neglect of agriculture. Another is attachment to the status quo. Persons with wealth or power to preserve, corrupt officials, or merchants or poor people who fail to understand the causes of poverty and passively accept their lot in life may all resist needed changes. A third is poor allocation of resources: a capital-intensive industry, for example, when capital is scarce and labor abundant; in show-case development projects; or in excessive military spending. Other internal obstacles may stem from the period of colonialism, when systems of education, communications, transportation, commerce, and even food production were created for the purpose of exporting cheap raw materials or cash crops to the controlling country, not for local development. To reflect even a bit on these obstructions is to realize how difficult it is to overcome them.

Not all obstacles to development lie within the poor nations, however. Many are still imposed on them by the rich countries. These external obstacles, which also reflect the reluctance of those with advantages to give them up, include: 1) trade and investment practices that stack the deck against poor countries; 2) scarcity of genuine development assistance; and 3) "cultural colonialism" by which rich nations impose on poor countries growth-distorting values or systems, schools that prepare a few for college but leave the rest ill equipped to be better farmers or workers; or advertising that develops a craving for luxury products, from Cokes to cars, rather than for basic commodities.

These obstacles to development threaten to bury the poor world in a permanent sea of misery. They have to be dealt with candidly by both rich and poor nations through the adoption of positive alternatives (1984, p. 67)

In Bangladesh Dr. Clarence Maloney, a university lecturer and international development consultant, listed eight reasons why Bangladesh remains poor. They are:

1. Natural catastrophes. Bangladesh is subject to annual floods, a dry winter season that can be described as drought, spectacular cyclonic storms, and regular river erosion.
2. Exploitation by others. Bangladesh has been ruled by the Moguls, the British, and West Pakistan. Often more was taken out of the country than invested in it.
3. Population pressure. Within the lifetime of most grandparents, population has tripled from 35 million in 1930 to 100 million in 1986. This has led to fragmentation of land holdings and an increase of over 50 percent landlessness.
4. Illiteracy which means the inability to grasp concepts and use them to build up personal force and succeed. Half of the girls never attend school at all and most who do drop out before achieving full literacy.
5. Idleness is often cited as a reason for poverty. Most rural and poor people actually work very hard when work is available. The problem for men and women is not laziness but rather inadequate wages for work done.
6. Hierarchy, patronage, and exploitation. Bangladeshis are very conscious of rank which establishes rights to claim from those senior in the hierarchy and give or deny to dependents.
7. Individualism. Bengalis have a low capacity for social organization around an ideology or for a long period of time. Family ties are strong but cooperative ventures are often thwarted by selfish interests.
8. Trust, guilt, duty. Traditional economic relations still operate on trust but newer impersonal organizations suffer from dishonesty; embarrassment at public exposure is a stronger behavior control mechanism than guilt.

How did Zerubbabel and Nehemiah overcome opposition and obstacles? How many of the above have you encountered? Share your experiences in your group.

### Partners in Development

The reconstruction of Jerusalem and the temple also helps to show who proper partners in development should include. The options are:

- a) Work with anyone at all levels.
- b) Employ only Christians but serve everyone.
- c) Employ only Christians and serve only Christians.
- d) Employ and/or serve only some Christians (only protestants, evangelicals, "born again" Christians)

- f) Cooperate only with other Christian agencies.
- g) Work with any humanitarian organization.
- h) Link with government plans and/or officers.

Note that: - God used Cyrus and Daries (Daniel was his prime minister).

- The king sanctioned resources.
- Local officials opposed the program.
- Only Jews were allowed to work on the scheme.
- Prayer and worship were part of the program.
- The context was one of mixed races and religions.
- One of the projects was the temple

Who does the case study of rebuilding Jerusalem suggest that partners in development should be? What is the policy of your organization? What should it be? Identify your first and second choice on the list above. Debate the advantages and disadvantages of each choice.

### Religion and Development

Nehemiah was a man of prayer – he prayed a prayer of confession on hearing of the condition of people and property in Jerusalem (1:4ff);

-He prayed a prayer of petition when the king asked him what he was sad about (2:2)

-He prayed a prayer of dedication when the work was complete (3:1, 12:27-47).

He prayed a prayer of commitment to the people and their needs, (5:19)

-He prayed a prayer of benediction on his life and work (13:14, 13:22, 13:31).

The people also confessed their sins (9:1-3), praised God (9:5-35), petitioned God (9:36-37), dedicated themselves to God (10:28-39). The program began with prayer, was sustained with petition, and concluded with praise.

What place does prayer play in your program?

Describe a ground breaking, stone laying or dedication ceremony. What happen? Who participated? What program was organized?

In the New Testament salvation model on the relationship between evangelism and social responsibility this issue is explored more fully. At this point state your opinion about how religion and community development should be related.

### Conclusion

This study concludes with a basic philosophy of a true community development program

### Twelve These for Community Development

1. People are more important than things; the person is more important than the activity.
2. Growth comes from within each person; all persons have talents waiting to be discovered and used.