

Disconnects between Benefactors and Beneficiaries as a Cause of Perpetual Poverty

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The term “poverty alleviation” persists in the lexicons of most Christian and non-Christian agencies involved in community development work, especially those working in developing countries. The 2018 World Bank report *Poverty and Shared Prosperity* shows evidence of a reduction of world poverty by 68 million people between 2013 and 2015.¹ And yet 736 million people continue to live in poverty worldwide.² Sub-Saharan Africa continues to be the most severely affected, with 41 percent of its population—413 million people—living in poverty.³ Initiatives to address poverty, such as the United Nations’ Millennium Development Goals, indicate that immense human and financial resources are being invested to alleviate global poverty.⁴ Yet despite these measures, millions are still threatened by extreme hunger, disease, and homelessness.

Poverty remains a major problem in South Africa.⁵ The apartheid system (1948–1994) led to the majority black population suffering social

1. Based on purchasing power parity, currently \$1.90 US dollars per day. World Bank, *Poverty and Shared Prosperity 2018: Piecing Together the Poverty Puzzle* (Washington, DC: World Bank Group, 2018), 15.

2. *Ibid.*, 1.

3. *Ibid.*, 15.

4. United Nations, *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2015* (New York: United Nations, 2015).

5. In 2015, more than 30,400,000 people lived in poverty out of a population of about 57,900,000. Statistics South Africa, *Poverty on the Rise in South Africa*, www.statssa.gov.za, accessed February 4, 2018.

and economic exclusion to benefit the minority white population,⁶ who enjoyed privileges of key development assets such as owning land and access to good education and health systems.⁷ Since the end of apartheid, the South African government has sought to implement various policies designed to reverse ever-growing unemployment, extreme poverty, and the widening gap between the rich and the poor.⁸ However, despite all such efforts and financial investments, poverty continues to dehumanize and devastate most communities, especially in rural areas. Women are disproportionately affected, as they continue to have less control of and less access to social and economic assets such as land, employment, and financial capital.⁹ Traditional patriarchal practices further disempower South African women by limiting their decision making in matters directly affecting their well-being.

Why does poverty persist despite much human effort and massive financial investments by Christian and non-Christian agencies? In this article I argue that poverty persists because most poverty alleviation strategies are non-participatory and, thus, are less effective. Non-participatory approaches deprive communities of their ability to think, plan, and act against poverty based on their development aspirations. Based on desk research or textbook knowledge, these approaches create a disconnect between benefactors' understanding of the community's actual needs and the beneficiaries' desired goals for their social and economic development.

Poverty alleviation is complex. It requires a nuanced understanding of causes and dimensions, engagement with contextual development frameworks, and effective implementation processes. This article contributes to this effort, drawing on my doctoral research¹⁰ and thirteen years of experience in participatory community development in rural KwaZulu-

6. Ismail Davids, "Development Theories: Past to Present," in *Development, the State, and Civil Society in South Africa*, 3rd edn., ed. Ismail Davids and Francois Theron (Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers, 2014), 16.

7. *Ibid.*, 17.

8. *Ibid.*

9. See Constantina Safilio-Rothschild, "Agriculture Policies and Women Producers," in *Gender, Work, and Population in Sub-Saharan Africa*, ed. Aderanti Adepaju and Christine Oppong (London: James Currey, 1994), 56. These policies include, for example, Growth, Employment, and Redistribution (1996); Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa (2005); New Growth Plan (2010); and National Development Plan (2012).

10. Audrey Matimelo, "Mobilizing Community Assets to Alleviate Poverty among Women: A Case Study of Zimele Developing Community Self-Reliance in Rural KwaZulu-Natal" (PhD diss., University of KwaZulu Natal, South Africa, 2016).

Natal, South Africa. I begin with theoretical foundations, delineating the various dimensions of poverty and identifying sources of disconnects between benefactors and beneficiaries through the seminal work of Paulo Freire. I then summarize the findings of my doctoral research regarding four benefactor/beneficiary disconnects that cause poverty to persist. My article concludes with theological reflection on the spirituality of poverty alleviation.

Foundations

Poverty is complex; therefore, effective intervention against poverty requires an understanding of its multiple dimensions.

- “Income poverty” refers to an individual’s inability to have the requisite income to purchase a basic food basket that “provide[s] sufficient nutrition for an active, productive life.”¹¹ South Africa has one of the highest income inequalities, with 63 percent of households living below the poverty line.¹²

- “Social poverty” results from social exclusion, usually because of gender, age, race, or disability promoted in socio-economic networks that are male dominated.¹³ The most important asset in any community is its people, and no genuine community change can occur without the initiative and full participation of that community’s people.¹⁴ The legacy of apartheid is one of the major causes of ongoing social poverty in South Africa.¹⁵

- “Capability deprivation poverty” occurs when people’s capabilities are not enhanced through opportunities of economic activity, enjoyment of good health, and good education. Economist Amartya Sen explains that “poverty must be seen as the deprivation of basic capabilities rather

11. John Gershman and Alec Irwin, “Getting a Grip on the Global Economy,” in *Dying for Growth: Global Inequality and the Health of the Poor*, ed. Jim Yong Kim, Joyce Millen, Alec Irwin, John Gershman (Monroe, ME: Common Courage Press, 2000), 15.

12. United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development World Report* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 19. See also Annie Leatt, “Income Poverty in South Africa, South African Child Gauge,” 24; available at http://www.ci.org.za/depts/ci/pubs/pdf/general/gauge2006/gauge2006_income_poverty.pdf.

13. Bill Jordan, *A Theory of Poverty and Social Exclusion* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1996), 4.

14. Patricia Watkins Murphy and James V. Cunningham, *Organizing Community Controlled Development: Renewing Civil Society* (London: SAGE Publications, 2003), 107.

15. Mavis Mhlauli, End Salani, and Rosinah Mokotedi, “Understanding Apartheid in South Africa through the Racial Contract,” *International Journal of Asian Social Science* 5, no. 4 (2015): 204.

than merely as lowness of income, which is the standard criterion of identification of poverty.”¹⁶ For this reason, Deryke Belshaw and Ian Livingstone argue that the Human Development Index is the best indicator for well-being, in that it combines indicators of income, health, and access to knowledge.¹⁷

- The process of democratization empowers the poor to participate in development activities. “Disempowerment poverty” results when people are hindered from participating in economic and political processes. In South Africa disempowerment poverty is especially problematic for women due to patriarchal practices.¹⁸

- “Physical poverty” refers to a lack in infrastructure such as road networks, mass communication facilities, railway lines, housing, water and sanitation, and energy.¹⁹ Research conducted by the University of Johannesburg found that some of the main reasons for frequent protests in South Africa are lack of housing, water and sanitation, political representation, electricity, municipal administration, roads, employment, land, and medical facilities.²⁰

- “Psychological poverty” occurs when people live with low self-esteem as they compare themselves to those with better incomes and food intake.²¹ This in turn diminishes their active participation in seeking a better life.²²

Effective poverty alleviation requires Christian and non-Christian agencies to understand the many dimensions of poverty through contextual and participatory processes. Brazilian educator Paulo Freire’s dialogi-

16. Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom* (New York: Knopf, 1999), 87.

17. Deryke Belshaw and Ian Livingstone, “Development in Sub-Saharan Africa: Progress and Problems,” *Renewing Development in Sub-Saharan Africa: Policy, Performance, and Prospectus* (London: Routledge, 2002), 10.

18. Thandika Mkandawire, “Programme Paper on Democracy, Governance, and Human Rights” (United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, unpublished, 2006), 4.

19. International Fund for Agricultural Development, *The State of World Rural Poverty: An Inquiry into Its Causes and Consequences* (London: IT Publication, 1992), 3; Peter Townsend, “Ending World Poverty in the Twenty-first Century,” in *Tackling Inequalities: Where Are We Now and What Can Be Done?*, ed. Christina Pantazis and David Gordon (Bristol: Policy Press, 2000), 216.

20. Laura Grant, “The Reasons behind Service Delivery Protests in South Africa,” *South African Mail* and the *Guardian*, February 12, 2014.

21. Bryant J. Myers, *Walking with the Poor: Principles and Practices of Transformational Development*, rev. and updated ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011), 15.

22. *Ibid.*; Johannes Haushofer, “The Price of Poverty: Psychology and the Cycle of Need,” *Foreign Affairs* (July 15, 2014): 21.

cal action and social development framework provides a useful theoretical tool for this work. In his seminal text, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire theorizes on the process of humanization as a vocation of those who are dehumanized by injustice, exploitation, or oppression.²³ He argues for closing the gap between benefactors (or educators) and beneficiaries (or educated). Instead of positioning benefactors as depositors and beneficiaries as receivers of knowledge, benefactors should stand in solidarity with beneficiaries by entering their reality and not perpetuating their dependence.²⁴ Freire observes a need for dialogue between benefactors and beneficiaries. He argues that without a critical, liberating, and respectful dialogue, benefactors work to deposit their views in beneficiaries, tantamount to treating people as objects rather than the subjects of their own development.²⁵ By contrast, when benefactors engage in reflective, respectful, and participatory dialogue with beneficiaries, they demonstrate trust in beneficiaries' ability to think independently.²⁶

Freire states the need for the conscientization of beneficiaries so that they understand their social reality. It is through the process of conscientization that "the peasant begins to get courage to overcome his dependence when he realizes that he is dependent. Until then, he goes along with the boss and says 'What can I do? I'm only a peasant.'"²⁷ In other words, people take action to change their social reality only when they are conscience of it. Freire argues for a shift from prescriptive actions to informed action on the part of benefactors. Non-prescriptive interventions are liberating because they are based on beneficiaries' participation rather than imposed by the benefactor.²⁸

Freire's landmark text offers analytical tools to recognize that poverty alleviation efforts and financial investments often fail to achieve desired change because most benefactors make assumptions based on their wrong prescriptions of beneficiaries' realities.

23. Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 30th anniversary ed., trans. Myra Bergman Ramos (New York: Continuum, 2000), 44.

24. *Ibid.*, 74, 49.

25. *Ibid.*, 62.

26. *Ibid.*, 62.

27. *Ibid.*, 61.

28. *Ibid.*, 66.

Participatory Inquiry Research Findings

As part of my doctoral research I conducted qualitative research using a mix of participatory inquiry methods with benefactors and beneficiaries from one faith-based organization (Organization A) and one non-faith-based organization (Organization B), gathering additional data from marketing brochures and reports. Both organizations work with poor women in rural communities of KwaZulu-Natal, promoting savings and credit models as poverty alleviation strategies. Organization A offers Self Help Groups made up of ten to twenty people, usually women, who use participatory methods to foster the socio-economic well-being of participants, their households, and their wider community. Members save uniform amounts, which accumulate across the time of their membership, and gain access to low interest loans. Organization B offers Savings and Credit Groups made up of ten to twenty-five community members who save varying amounts as shares, which are given out at the end of the year, and the members gain access to low-interest loans for personal needs. I conducted staff interviews with the directors and other senior managers of the two organizations. The purpose of these interviews was to capture staff perceptions of the context of poverty and the impact of the services they are providing, as workers involved in the formation and direct serving of the women in rural KwaZulu-Natal. My interviews with beneficiaries sought to develop an understanding of their perceptions of the impact of the organizations' poverty alleviation strategies. My findings revealed four primary disconnects between benefactors and beneficiaries that contribute to the persistence of poverty.

The first benefactor/beneficiary disconnect concerns the *causes* of poverty. It can be observed that in addition to the tendency to favor desk research over dialogue, benefactors frequently operate by a "law of general applicability," whereby poverty alleviation strategies that work among one group of beneficiaries are assumed to work in another. Yet the causes of poverty are complex, and alleviation strategies must be tailored to address a particular context.

Interview responses and organization reports from Organizations A and B demonstrated staff ignorance of the causes of poverty in rural KwaZulu-Natal. Staff presented beneficiaries as mostly widows, impacted by HIV and AIDS, unemployed, pensioners, with little education or skills and opportunities. What the organizations described were the beneficiaries' demographics rather than the causes of their poverty. When asked to identify the primary causes of their struggle with poverty, focus

group participants named their history of tribal wars, natural disasters, exclusion from economic activities, the burden of HIV and AIDS, and deep-rooted practices of a patriarchal system that denies women land ownership. Benefactors have to engage in reflective and respectful dialogue with beneficiaries and understand the complex causes of poverty in order to effectively alleviate poverty.

A second disconnect concerns the *dimensions* of poverty affecting women in rural KwaZulu-Natal. Both organizations' programs seek to alleviate *income* poverty. My research revealed that prior to their participation in the programs, several of the women already had income sources, for example, from child grants, pension grants, and husbands. Research data showed a small increase of women who identified agriculture as a new means of earning income because of their participation in the poverty-alleviation programs of Organizations A and B. The lower number of women involved in farming is best explained by traditional patriarchal practices that deny women rights to land ownership and the disorientation suffered during land displacement through tribal wars and apartheid. In my work in rural KwaZulu-Natal, I have observed that most widowed or single women struggle to own land to enable farming and are unlikely to engage in agriculture because of past economic exclusion and land displacements suffered.

The struggles the participants expressed in focus group discussions revealed that the dimensions of poverty limiting these women were disempowerment poverty and physical poverty rather than income poverty. They lacked opportunities to participate in decision-making processes that affected their economic growth and infrastructure to facilitate participation in economic networks, such as land distribution, labor, information, education, water, markets, health, roads, transport network, and electricity.²⁹ Focus on income poverty while paying little attention to disempowerment poverty and physical poverty minimized the effectiveness of both organizations' efforts toward economic empowerment.³⁰ As Freire observes, the attempt to liberate a person without inviting them into respectful participation in their own liberation is tantamount to treating poor people as objects needing only free services.

29. Matimelo, "Mobilizing Community Assets," 136–37.

30. A similar disconnect has occurred between the South African government and people in some rural communities who are selling or renting out houses built for them by the government, then getting involved in violent protests.

A third disconnect concerns the *role of religion* in poverty alleviation strategies. Religion is ubiquitous to the quest for a good life in almost all African communities.³¹ People in most African communities see their faith in God as foundational to, and inseparable from, their development aspirations, including in rural KwaZulu-Natal, where religious practices are imbedded in people's quest for a better life. I observed beneficiaries of both organizations beginning and ending their meetings with prayers and singing religious songs, and religious faith was frequently raised in focus group discussions. Program beneficiaries identified the church as a physical asset that contributes to their livelihood strategies by being a support structure, a foundation for faith and morals, and a market for income generating activities.³² Participants also identified the church as a place where they were known for their gifts of care and skills for sewing, as contributors of tithes and offerings and active participants.

Organization A staff pointed out that they support and encourage prayers and Bible studies among program beneficiaries, while B's staff stated that they are not a faith-based organization and do not encourage prayers or any other religious activities because of the problematic nature of religion. It is evident that there is a disconnect between Organization B and its beneficiaries regarding the role of religion in social development. Though it is undeniable that religion has contributed to poverty in some communities historically, this does not justify the call for its absence in social and economic development work. If benefactors fail to understand the religious worldview of their beneficiaries, they fail to be relevant in their work. People's faith in God is inseparable from their day-to-day lives.

The fourth disconnect stems from benefactors' failing to *contextualize* their poverty alleviation strategies, seeking to replace traditional survival strategies rather than building on them. Program participants in both organizations were, to a large extent, already involved in traditional survival strategies—such as broom-making, farming and selling vegetables, and raising and selling indigenous chickens—before they began participating in the organizations' savings and credit programs.³³ The women

31. Religion and religious disciplines are ubiquitous to the quest for a good life in Africa. African Religious Health Assets Programme, "Appreciating Assets: The Contribution of Religion to Universal Access in Africa," *Report for the World Health Organization* (Cape Town: African Religious Health Assets Programme, 2006), 3.

32. Matimelo, "Mobilizing Community Assets," 125 (Table 5.18).

33. *Ibid.*, 120 (Table 5.8), 125–26 (Tables 5.9, 5.10, 5.11, and 5.12). Due to wars, land displacements, and natural disasters, they had lost some traditional income-generating opportunities, livestock, fields, and agricultural skills.

were not idle but were busy working to survive. After adopting savings activities as a supplemental source of income, Organization A participants' income sources were enhanced by 12 percent while those of Organization B participants were reduced by 20.5 percent.³⁴ Only a third of all participants diversified their livelihoods through sewing, selling airtime, tourism, tuck-shop, selling soap, baking, and selling electricity.³⁵ Others remained dependent on child grants, pension grants, or other traditional livelihood strategies. A failure to understand and appreciate the need to enhance traditional livelihood strategies rather than replace them led to benefactors promoting livelihood strategies that were new to the people, such as tourism, rentals, and baking.³⁶

The Spirituality of Poverty Alleviation

The first key theological insight that emerges from this research concerns the *missio Dei*. David Bosch, one of South Africa's leading missiologists, states that "it is not so much that God has a mission for his church in the world, but that God has a church for his mission in the world."³⁷ The *missio Dei* is God's own missionary cause seen across the history of salvation, from creation through the incarnate mission of God's Son to its continuation in the mission of the church.³⁸ The Triune God has invited the church to participate in that mission for the well-being of God's people, not only through evangelism but also through justice for the weak, dignity for the poor, and healing for the hurting (Luke 4:18). In efforts to alleviate poverty, it is important to recognize that God has been at work in promoting well-being among people who suffer all forms of poverty.

God has given and sustained human life since creation. Through the Mosaic law, God structured the communal life of his people to promote

34. Ibid., 115 (Table 5.4). The 43 participants in Organization A reported 59 income opportunities before joining the organization and 75 income opportunities after; the 47 participants in Organization B reported 82 income opportunities before joining the organization and 54 income opportunities after.

35. Ibid., 120 (Table 5.8). 60 percent of Organization A participants and 21 percent of Organization B participants engaged in new business opportunities.

36. Ibid., 115 (Table 5.4), 120 (Table 5.8).

37. David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 81.

38. Thomas Schirrmacher, *Missio Dei: God's Missional Nature*, World of Theology Series 10 (Bonn: Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft, 2017), 12.

love, peace, and justice, prohibiting activities that put life at risk. When God's people lived in accordance to the laws and commandments they received, they experienced well-being and protected themselves from dehumanizing conditions that put their lives at risk. In his incarnate life and ministry, Jesus advanced the *missio Dei*, promoting human dignity, life, and well-being: "I have come that they might have life and have it to the full" (John 10:10). Jesus enacted this statement by freeing people from dehumanizing conditions through restoration, deliverance, and healing (Luke 4:18–19). Christ's redemptive death on the cross restored human dignity, which had been lost through sin and broken relationship. Jesus's life and death indicate clearly that God is present and among those who are suffering and oppressed.

The *missio Dei* as the work of well-being is a challenge to the work and ministry of the church, which is called to be God's agent to those suffering from and dehumanized by poverty. The work of redemption is God's action of grace and mercy to his people, and men and women in the church and in Christian organizations are his envoys.³⁹ The purpose of the church on earth is that it fully participate in bringing about well-being as it continues to advance the *missio Dei*,⁴⁰ bringing peace, justice, and abundant life to people. As the church gets involved in social ministries such as economic empowerment programs, care ministries, and the like, it is involved in the *missio Dei* in which "the Church has been privileged to participate."⁴¹

My research demonstrates that many people turn to Christian disciplines in their search for well-being, identifying Christian values and practices as sources of well-being. This is clearly seen in activities of prayer, singing Christian songs, and reading the Bible during meetings. People are desperately in need of the church's ministry of well-being. This presents the church and its leaders with a great opportunity to work with those living in poverty to fulfill the commandment of the Lord Jesus that his people be the salt and the light of the earth (Matthew 5:13–14). When the church engages in ministries of social and economic empowerment or care ministries, it participates in the *missio Dei*.

The second theological insight of my research is that, following Christ's

39. Ibid., 20.

40. Steve De Gruchy, "Integrating Mission and Development: Ten Theological Themes," *International Congregational Journal* 5, no. 1 (2005): 27.

41. Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 393.

incarnate ministry among the poor, the church and Christian agencies should embrace the work of *diakonia* (ministries of relief or support) while promoting *koinonia* (fellowship or belonging in community). Most poverty alleviation strategies seeking to address dehumanization and social injustice engage the poor as clients rather than agents of their own change. Such churches and Christian organizations are committed to promoting human well-being by meeting the immediate needs in communities affected by poverty. This is the diaconal work of the church⁴² and is the most common response of churches and Christian agencies to the needs of poor communities. The diaconal ministry was part of the early Christian *koinonia*, as the church met the immediate practical needs of the poor (Acts 6:1). Such quick responses are a clear demonstration of Christian love and service as the church seeks to promote people's dignity, which is often robbed by calamities and poverty.

However, if not well executed, the diaconal ministry can cause dependency of the poor on those providing relief and welfare. The poor look to service providers for help and neglect to use their God-given skills and abilities to achieve their own well-being. The biblical model of the Christian *koinonia* committing to *diakonia* recognizes those suffering in poverty as agents of their own change and seeks to mobilize local systems and people to help relieve the prevailing needs in their communities. The rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem clearly demonstrates the community that is built when people work together to achieve their development goals and alleviate poverty and suffering: "You see the trouble we are in: Jerusalem lies in ruins, and its gates have been burned with fire. Come let us rebuild the walls of Jerusalem and we will be no longer in disgrace....The people replied, 'Let us start rebuilding.' So they began this good work" (Nehemiah 2:18–20, NIV). In this account, local people are empowered to solve their community's problems as they work together with community leaders in *koinonia*.

Finally, well-being cannot be divorced from a wider framework of God's shalom. Perry Yoder argues persuasively that the message of shalom preached by prophets in the Old Testament is God's vision for the world.⁴³ God's desire is that people live in well-being and at peace with one other and with God. This message of socio-political peace is central

42. De Gruchy, "Integrating Mission and Development," 27; David Coghlan and Teresa Brannick, *Doing Research in Your Own Organization* (London: SAGA Publication Limited, 2010), 22.

to God's message of shalom, which also refers to God working toward the transformation of the social structures to promote "peace and equality for all of God's people."⁴⁴ Therefore, the message of shalom encourages people to live in unity and peace with themselves, with one another, with the environment, and with God.⁴⁵ This the full biblical vision of well-being and should also provide the vision of poverty alleviation work of the church and Christian agencies.

Among the dimensions of poverty, disempowerment poverty is closely related to the socio-political context of South Africa; the suffering of the people is a result of poverty, low income, lack of infrastructure, a history of social isolation, and lower capabilities (education, skills, and health). In addition to the church and Christian agencies contributing to alleviating poverty, churches and Christian agencies also need to engage in works that seek to bring about the transformation of socio-political realities. Rather than limiting their ministry of well-being within the buildings of their congregations or organizations, churches and Christian agencies need to engage in prophetic ministries, openly condemning poor socio-political conditions caused mainly by bad governance and political decisions. When churches and Christian agencies engage in prophetic ministry, political leadership, and dialogue programs that seek to alleviate suffering and poverty, they participate more fully in God's vision of shalom.

Conclusion

Disconnects between benefactors and beneficiaries provide some insight into why poverty persists despite enormous human and financial investments to alleviate it. My research on benefactors and beneficiaries in rural KwaZulu-Natal has revealed disconnects in understanding (1) the causes of poverty among beneficiaries, (2) the dimension of poverty affecting rural KwaZulu-Natal, (3) the role of religion in poverty alleviation strategies, and (4) the necessity of contextual poverty alleviation strategies that build on traditional survival livelihoods rather than replacing them. This ethnographic research gives rise to theological reflection that contributes to building a contextual theology on poverty, suffering, and well-being to help guide the church and Christian agencies as they

43. Perry Yoder, *Shalom* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1987), 2.

44. Ibid.

45. Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Until Justice and Peace Embrace: The Kuyper Lectures for 1981 Delivered at the Free University of Amsterdam* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 72.

participate in poverty alleviation. These include the *missio Dei* as God's mission in which the church is privileged to participate; Jesus's incarnation; joining *diakonia* and *koinonia* in poverty alleviation; and pursuing God's shalom on earth.

As we engage in poverty alleviation work, it is inspiring to be reminded that we are part of the bigger work God is doing among his people on earth. It is a privilege to be stewards of his creation. May he give us grace and strength to serve him.