



Transcriptions

Humane & Godly Relationships as the Goal of Development

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Annotation: *Daystar University Conference on the Church's Role in Development, Final Session, Nairobi, Kenya, July 1980.* In this final session, Ted Ward affirms that development requires a long-range vision of the future toward which it is moving. He defines the goal of humane and godly relationships as working with people under God. The appropriate posture of the leader is that of the servant for as we serve God we serve people; and as we serve people we serve God.



In this final lecture, I'm going to try, not only to summarize, but also to see if we can't come to some particular conclusion. One of the questions that we had asked early in the week, and we have re-asked it several times, is where is development going? What is the goal of development? What is the proper end of development? One of the great catechisms of the church, in its very first catechism question, asks what is the purpose of man? What is the end of man? What is the real outcome of man's being is being asked in that important theological study, the Westminster Catechism, asks what is the end of man? Man's chief end, it says, is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever. What is the end of development? The end of development is that man should enjoy God forever.

Now you say, well, that's very abstract, that's very far, that's very out of the situation. But I submit to you that development has to have some kind of a long-range image; a vision of the future toward which it is moving. And it well for us to begin with a theological view that says, what we are

here for, ultimately, is to glorify God and enjoy him forever. And if we are saved by the blood of Jesus Christ, we have salvation which is a status with God that is being fulfilled in our lives and will be culminated in a final resurrection. Do you believe that? But let's look at the pieces and parts. Will be fulfilled in a final resurrection, but is now. See it? Will be fulfilled, but is now. That's what development is about. The 'is now' part of the will be, ultimately, fulfilled. And sometimes when we so called spiritualize all our ministry, we put such attention on the truth. But the partial truth of the ultimate fulfillment, that we fail to take notice—as the great theologians of the church have pointed out across the years—that salvation is an experience that is now. And as we develop as Christians, we develop into a fulfillment that causes us to enjoy God forever.

Now, just to review some of things that we've said about how the development process fits into all of this, especially with reference to the social, economic, political development issues in the world, you'll remember this transparency we used earlier in the week. We called this one, Needs of People and Three Basic Approaches to Development. Perhaps when we used this one, I guess it was last week, it may not have meant so much to you. I thought I'd show it to you again so that it might, today, seem even more something that you can understand.

The first approach: *bringing change without concern for the needs of people*, is what we find very often resulting from people who have, what I referred to yesterday, as the first level of vision, the first level of awareness. It's a focus on content, a focus on delivering things. It's a focus on informing people of facts. It is a focus on things, and it is basically materialistic.

The second of the three basic approaches is *bringing change based on outsiders' views of the needs of people*. And we identified that one yesterday in terms of the characteristic of consultants and development planners who are very, very much into the idea that the important thing is meeting the needs of people. As if somehow seeing some buckets that need to be filled so that they can be filled; so that we can walk away and say, look, we filled the buckets, we met the needs.

That third level, *bringing change as a result of planning and working with people based on their developing view of their needs*, is far more demanding, far more complex, but far more fulfilling; and, in the final analysis, far more God-honoring. I suggest it as the title for today's talk, Humane and Godly Relationships as the Christian Goal of Development.

Now what do we mean by humane and godly relationship? We mean working with people under God. We serve people and we serve God. The posture of leadership in the Christian community is the posture of servant. We serve God as we serve people. We serve people as we serve God. You cannot disconnect this. Sometimes people will say, there are two aspects of human relationship: one is toward man, the other is toward God. I submit that is like saying that the letter L is really two letter I's connected; only one of them is laying on its side. What a ridiculous idea. The letter L is not two letter I's. A letter L is simply a letter L and you no longer have a letter L when you divide it. The letter L is the letter in the Roman alphabet, orthography that speaks to the two interconnected fulfillments of a godly and humane relationship. Is it possible to have a godly relationship that is not humane? Is it possible to have a humane relationship that is not, at least in some part, godly? No.

When we talk about the matter of relationship with people and relationship with God, we are talking about two parts of the same thing. And we should be very careful to treat people as God

treats us. And God does not treat us with sarcasm. God does not treat us with harsh and bitter words. God does not treat us with a kind of disinterest that says, I will maybe talk to you tomorrow, but today I must go to catch a fish. God has time for us; we must have time for people.

If we have this image, we may be meeting needs, that we think are glorifying to God, but we are not building that relationship with people that, in fact, is demanded by a godly relationship. This third model is a concern for that kind of relationship with people that is modeled on, and is a fulfillment of, our relationship with God. And when we talk about our relationship with God, be sure to think from God's perspective not just from your own. From God's perspective, God looks at you, sees your limitations, recognizes your flaws, is well aware of your every tendency to sin and nevertheless loves you and is quite willing to forgive all of that.

Is our humane relationship with others a similar one? Any of us who are half smart can see the weaknesses in each other. You've been with me for two weeks, and if you're not alert enough to spot some of my weaknesses, you need to think a little bit more carefully. But you are willing to accept me in spite of my weaknesses. You are willing to relate to me in spite of my weaknesses. That's a godly and humane relationship. The relationship that says, I don't insist that you become perfect or that you become more like me then I will talk with you, then I will relate to you. God never does that. God does not say, become like me and then I will have fellowship. God says I will make it possible for you to have fellowship with me because I want to have fellowship with you. We should make it possible for people to have fellowship with us and with each other.

The role of a development agent should be primarily, first and foremost, at the very practical level of building friendships and trust. And if anyone goes away from this workshop saying, well, it was a great workshop, but was very theoretical. There's almost nothing there that I could really go away and plan to use next week, it's because you missed this next three minutes. The very, very important next step for all of us is to start from this point with a deeper commitment to be relationally involved with God's people: to listen better, to respect people more, to ask more questions, to be a little slower to provide all the big answers, and to help other people see their worthwhileness as human beings. And I'm talking about the person who does the simple things: the Sammy's of this world who run the machines, the people who serve in the kitchen, the people who sweep the room, the people that sometimes we can overlook because we're busy with something else. There is no such thing as a person to whom you should not relate. This is a terrible problem in some societies that are so highly class-structured that certain people cannot talk with others. This is where the gospel of Jesus Christ comes in and breaks down social tradition. In a society such as this that has been so long under the shadow of a colonial-structured system where there are big people and little people, it's a terrible problem. And virtually any of us coming in as outsiders find ourselves becoming like this group or like this group and holding a distance away from this group. That's hard for outsiders. And I submit it's hard for people in your own situations.

I want to show you something again that we used earlier in the lecture,; A Christian View of Development as Participation. And in that lecture, we looked at the second of these two sorts of goals, motives, outcomes, fulfillments of development. We said that the first of these is, indeed, the valid purpose of meeting needs. There's nothing wrong with wanting to meet needs. There's a great deal wrong with stopping there. We should be particularly providing for ways for people to participate. This was the emphasis of that lecture, the importance of participation. Two of you this morning in our reviews talked specifically about how important it is for you, as a project person, to

find more ways for other people to take responsibility. Remember that one? Wow, that's right on! That's what we're after—find more ways to share the roles and tasks and responsibilities. But as I said in that lecture, it goes beyond that. We should look toward humane and godly relationships as the fulfillment of that participation. And that's what we're down to today. What are the grounds of humane and godly relationship?

First of all, they are the business of human communication. One of the most important things about being human is that you have a marvelously elegant way to relate to other creatures of the same species. If you have ever studied animals closely, you'll notice how animals seem to crave ways to communicate and they will push each other, they will nuzzle each other, they will push their noses toward each other, they will make little sounds. And, in many respects, as you look at the animal you're looking at a partial fulfillment of God's great plan. God did not stop with the animals. One of the most distinct elements of that sixth-day creation, man, was that man was created with a communicative capacity. Now people will tell us that the chimpanzees and the porpoises and the dolphins can communicate. Oh, indeed, there's no question. All animals communicate one way or another. Apparently the bees, the honeybees, are able to communicate in terms of telling one another what direction to fly and approximately how far. But how would you like to go through life only being able to communicate to another human being how far to fly and what direction? We would not be human apart from our communicating capacity. Human communication is the base of the humane relationship. The base of the godly relationship is also communication. It is extremely important that, as development people, we put our basic attention on the development of good, strong communication linkages among all the people participating. We've got to learn to listen to each other. We've got to learn to speak clearly. We've got to learn to inform precisely, but we particularly have to learn to be patient and deduce the meanings that other people are sending our way.

Is the same thing true of God and his relationship to us? I submit it is. If I were to ask you, what are the most important ingredients in the development of a spiritual life, what would you answer? The odds are that if you weren't thinking too carefully and precisely about the development issue here today, and I were just to hit you after church Sunday morning and say, what are the most important things in spiritual development, what would you answer? The odds are strong that you'd say, prayer and Bible study. Very interesting. What is prayer? Communication. What is Bible study? Communication. Now it's not quite fair to say the Bible study is God's communication to us and the prayer is our communication to God. That's not quite fair, but it's pretty close. Do you think God listens when you pray? If you think God listens, then truly you have a communication. Right? Does God answer your prayers? Okay, then you surely have a communication. When God speaks in his Word, do you listen? Does God like it when you listen? Oh, yes. Does God pay attention to whether or not you listen? Do you have communication? Indeed. You see what I'm suggesting that is at the base of a humane and godly relationship is human and spiritual communication?

Why are we, within the Daystar Communication Center, concerned about development? Because, at the bottom of it all, its communication. And somehow if we could see this and begin to examine the respect relationship that we show for God, and the respect that God shows for us; and the love that we show to God, and the love that God shows to us and say, hey, that should be the same on the other bar of the L. See it? It should be a humane and godly relationship.

What, then, is effective leadership of development? It is the development of that kind of relationship with people that is a reflection of our relationship with God, and it is built on a continually improving set of communication processes. Now that's not a technology; that's not asking you to use overhead projectors to communicate with God, and it doesn't even require that you use overhead projectors and chalkboards to communicate with human beings. But it does require that you invest yourself and your thoughts in others. What do we call that process where we invest ourselves in others? We have a word for that, we call that—we've been doing it here this morning—you've invested your thoughts in others. You've said, here's what I'm thinking, listen to what I'm thinking. What do we call that? Sharing, sharing. Notice, the communication then makes possible the sharing.

The sharing is when we recognize that each of us has a gift, a gift of knowledge, a gift of experience. How many of you here have had exactly the same experiences in life as some other human being in this room? You've had exactly the same experiences. Nobody? That's right, that's right. How many of you have exactly the same understandings as another person in this room? Can you see someone in this room who has exactly the same understandings? No. That's one of the beautiful things about being God's sixth-day creature, that we are all very unique. Have you ever noticed in the animal kingdom how generally animals of a species look very much alike, very much alike? Look around this room. Can you see two people who look very much alike? Only if you're not very good at identifying differences among White faces. We all look different. We all think different. We all have different experiences. And when we share, what do we do? We enrich one another from our particular experiences and understanding. Is that too theoretical? No, no, that's what's it all about.

You find that straight through the Scriptures. You find that in the Old Testament. You find it in the New Testament, that different people have different experiences and have different ways of helping each other. Do you find Abraham helping Lot? Trying to. You find experiences of God's people all through the Ages helping one another because of the differences in their experience. That's part of the beauty of being human. So we communicate and we share, but what else is involved in a truly godly and humane relationship? Caring—communicating, sharing, and caring.

What was the very first big human care question ever asked? *Am I my brother's keeper?* Thank you. Am I my brother's keeper? And it is a beautiful example of the effects of sin. It was an invalid question. It's a question that seemed to ask for yes or no as the answer. It's a little bit akin to have you stopped beating your wife? How do you answer have I stopped beating my wife? If I say yes, I've stopped, it suggests that I once did; if I say, no, I haven't stopped, it suggests that I still am. I can't answer; it's an invalid question. Cain asked an invalid question because he was under a deep burden of conscience guilt. What is the correct answer? God didn't answer that question, but if God had answered it, how would he have answered it? Not yes or no; but Cain says, am I my brother's keeper? Why do you ask me where he is? What would God have said had God chosen to say something? God could easily have said, no, you're not your brother's keeper, but you are your brother's brother. And that being your brother's brother carries with it, not only the obligation and opportunity to communicate and to share, but to care. Cain asked an invalid question because he was his brother's brother and he acknowledged that in the question, am I my, what was the word? *Am I my brother's keeper?* And what he was evading was what it means to be a brother.

Especially in the New Testament, we learn what it means to be a brother and we have already pointed out in the workshop that part of what it means to be a brother is to be in the relationship of bearing one another's burdens, which I already suggested is not simply a matter of putting all the load over on me. If I bear your burden, that's one thing, but if we bear one another's burden what do we do? We share. And we, you know, you take some, I take some, or maybe we take turns. It doesn't ask me to carry all the load. It doesn't ask you to carry all the load. It asks that we walk together, as brothers, sharing the load. That's what caring is all about.

Caring is not being willing to take over all the responsibility, not being willing to say, oh, I am your redeemer and your savior and here I am with my truckload of food. But it's a matter of getting into a situation and bearing one another's burdens. There's a development principle there, there's a relief principle there; but more basic, there is a Christian relationship principle there. And that's what I'm driving at. Development should move in the direction of having more and more people see what it means to have a Christian relationship. I believe that Jesus Christ is honored and that souls are saved as people see what it means to have a Christian relationship with human beings. Do you believe that? If you can communicate through the sermons you preach as you walk with people what it means to have a humane and godly relationship, people will be saved. Someone says, I'm only interested in salvation. In one way of looking at it, that's all I'm interested in. I'm only interested, finally, in people becoming right with God. And this is where sometimes I'm afraid some of my brothers and sisters are not aware. Because of the experiences God has given me I feel a burden to share that I have seen people come to Jesus Christ because of what they've learned about Christians in their hearts of compassion, concern. Communication that is Christian has a Christ-honoring power, and indeed sharing and concern have a Christ-honoring capability.

What is the end of development, then, for us? It would be too simple to simply say, the end of development is that people might be saved, but that's not a bad answer. The trouble is that that answer can be perverted so that we use development strategies in order to trick people into church. And buying people into church is not a good end for development. Do you see it? There's a difference. And yet when you go away from here and someone says, well, what does Ward think about salvation? I want you to be able to say, Ward says salvation's the most important thing going. But Ward doesn't believe that it's good to trick people into it; that it isn't real that way, that people have to come into a real relationship with Christ. And the only way they'll ever find a real relationship with Christ is if they can find somebody else who has a real relationship with Christ. And that's what discipleship is about. That's what mission is all about; that's what the Great Commission is all about: Go you into all the world and be my witness preaching, teaching, and making disciples. Because God puts this limitation on himself—God intends not to use a heavenly loudspeaker system to say, all the earth, now hear this, you've got ten minutes, all repent. Could God do it that way if he wanted to? I suppose he could, but I'm not sure that would be the kind of relationship that he wants to have with people. He has elected to do it a very different way, and in some respects, a rather difficult way because he's trusting me with it and he's trusting you with it and I'm sure not sure about you. And I'm even less sure about me. But that's the way God wants to do it, so we're stuck with it. But, praise God, he lets us have a part in it. I'm not sure I'd like to be an onlooker as he does the heavenly megaphone thing, you know. I don't think I'd like to be an onlooker. I'm really glad to be part of the way he wants to do it and the way he wants to do it is people-to-people, person-to-person, direct involvement through what kind of relationship? One that begins with . . . *communication* . . . communication then moves to . . . *sharing* . . . sharing and is fulfilled

in . . . *caring* . . . caring which shows as people are . . . bearing one another's burdens. That's what we're here for.

So what is the end of development? Is the end of development increased technology? Is the end of development easier life? Is the end of development cleaner people? Is the end of development better health? It may be all of that, but that isn't where it's headed. Those may be symptoms, but they're not the real thing. What is the real thing? It is in that humane and godly relationship that shows in communication, sharing, and bearing one another's burdens. I ask you to reflect on this, not simply as a spiritual proposition, but as a very practical action plan.

A human being is made up of a physical, a mental, a moral, a social, and a spiritual component. That is a faulty view of God's Creation. What's wrong with that? We are created in the image of God and that combination doesn't add up to God. God is not a combination of the physical, the mental, the emotional, the social, and the spiritual. What is God? The Spirit of God in the Word teaches us that God is a Spirit. And to be created in the image of One who is a Spirit means that what you are seeing before you is a strange physical shell in which the real me is located. I am a spiritual being, but I have a physical part. I have an emotional part. I have a social part. I have a mental part. Those are the parts, but I don't have a spiritual part. None of you here has a spiritual dimension. None of you here has a spiritual part. You are a spiritual being.

You have a physical part. Now, think about that. What is it that happens when a Christian dies? What does the Scripture say? We are absent from the body, present with the Lord. In other words, the 'me' is present with the Lord. Right? The 'me' has left the physical part at that moment. Right? We could say the same thing about all these other parts, but you can't say that about the spiritual because the spiritual's not a part. So when people say, well, we have got to be careful to minister primarily to the spiritual part. No, it's faulty theology. You can minister to the person by ministering to any and all of the parts, but the real concern is what about that person as spiritual being? Right? So as we minister to any of the parts, we're simply using ways to come through to where the reality of the person is. You say, that's even more abstract. Think about it. Think about it in the days ahead and ask yourself, "How do you minister to the reality of a person?" You must relate through that person's consciousness. You must relate through that person's mental part, physical part, social part, emotional part. That's the way you've got to go because we've got to come to people through communication. You've got to go through the parts, but you're going for the spiritual reality of the person. You cannot approach the spiritual person directly; you approach him through his parts. Only God approaches the spiritual directly. The Word of God can, but I can't and you can't.

What is it that we're after, then, in the humane and godly relationships? That's not even itself an end in itself. What is it that we're after? What is it that God is after? He is after that liberation from the effects of sin. I haven't yet felt that fulfilled in my life. I still, every day, walk under the effects of sin. Do you? Are you fully liberated? Are you becoming more liberated? Do you feel more free every day? That's spiritual growth. Through humane and godly relationships, God is working a process of freeing us, liberating us, and he warns us that that'll never be fulfilled until the great day of Christ's fulfilling it himself. But he gives us the chance in glory to feel as we move through life every day that this is becoming more liberated.

If the development worker, as a Christian, is not feeling himself or herself more liberated every day, perhaps the development worker is not working effectively. And ultimately the people in a development experience, the Christians, can feel more liberated from the effect of sin. And we pointed out at the beginning of the workshop that sin is, one way or another, at the bottom of all development flaws, development breakdowns, development stalemates. In one way or another, sin is the problem.

I'd like to call your attention to a passage of Scripture in closing and this will be something of our final experience together. So let me ask that you meditate on it thoughtfully, carefully in the 21st chapter of the gospel of John, the last section of John. You remember the incident when the disciples, having gone fishing after the resurrection of our Lord—they had the reassurance of knowing that Christ was raised—but it was necessary for them to care for their physical needs and to earn some income, and they went back to fishing. Nothing wrong with that, but notice that they did it. They weren't standing around waiting on a church to be founded so they could have a salary; they were at it. They were out fishing again, and Jesus doesn't chide them for it. He expects them out there and, in fact, he knew where to go to find them. And as they come close to the shore, they see him and they see him preparing breakfast for them. And perhaps they wonder where he found the fish, but he had them and he was preparing breakfast and they came back in.

But you remember that this was the time when Peter finally had a chance to deal with what must have been a terrible sense of guilt. Peter had been warned by our Lord that he was still human. Peter says, oh, I don't think so. I'm ready. Jesus says, come on recognize your weakness, recognize your humanity, be humble. Before the cock crows in the morning you'll have denied me three times. Peter says, you're kidding. I wouldn't do that. Jesus says, we'll see. And Peter does and Peter remembers the words of Christ and he has deep remorse. They're saying he had deep remorse. How would you have felt? How do you feel when you find yourself in the same spot? But here, after breakfast, Peter has a chance to talk to the Lord and this interesting conversation goes on in Matthew 21:15. When they'd finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon,"—and by the way this had to be an aside. This had to be of a little quiet side conversation. This wasn't a big public thing. Quietly Jesus said to Simon, "Son of John, do you truly love me more than these?" See, Jesus was saying, I know you love these people. I can see it in you. You're showing concern. You're showing compassion. You're a really involved person. You're a great development man, but do you really love me more than all of these? "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you."

There's a beautiful thing there. Peter's saying, I don't even have to answer you. You know the answer. Why do you ask me? I know you know the answer. Why do you ask me? Peter has great awareness of Jesus, but he says, nevertheless, I will answer you. Yes, I love you. Jesus said, pray more. Oh, no. Pardon me, I misread that. It says here, Jesus said, read the Bible more. Oh, no. My eyes are not very good this morning. Would somebody help me? What does it say there? Jesus said, what's it say? "*Feed my lambs.*" What else? What a process of restoring spiritual fellowship in the godly relationship. Jesus asks Peter to engage in a human relationship.

Again Jesus said, "Simon, Son of John, do you truly love me?" And he answered, "Yes Lord, you know that I love you." And Jesus said, "Tend my sheep." See it? What kind of restoration was Peter needing? Was Peter needing some kind of improvement in human relation skills? Was Peter feeling guilty because he had not preached effectively? Was Peter feeling that somehow his ministry was slipping? No. Peter said, I have wronged you, and Jesus is responding to Peter's sense of anxiety

about wronging Christ—a spiritual relationship. And what does he ask him to do? Take concerned responsibility for people. The third time he said to him, “Simon, Son of Peter, do you love me?” Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him a third time, “Do you love me?” He said, “Lord, you know all things. You know that I love you.” And Jesus said, “Feed my sheep.” Persistently, three times.

Now, if you take a look at this in ‘care,’ you can find that it’s deepening each time. It’s part of what’s in the text, but I’m asking you to look at it simply, this morning—to notice that out of that moment of deep anxiety and the needs of spiritual healing, Jesus comes to Peter and says, here’s what to do. And what does he ask him to do? Care. Care for people. It’s very plain. I tell you the truth. Jesus says, “When you were younger, you dressed yourself and you went where you wanted. And when you are old, you will stretch out your hands and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go.” Jesus said this to indicate what kind of death by which Peter would glorify God.” At that moment, strange, at that moment, Jesus was saying, restoration of your spiritual relationship is there as you tend my sheep, as you show concern for my people. But let me warn you, that he who is a development-oriented minister of God is, as you, headed for sure trouble. By this, Jesus indicated the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God.

I believe it firmly, that the most vulnerable Christians in this world are Christians that are involved in development. I haven’t mentioned that before this week. But if you’re serious about development and you fulfill your spiritual relationship the way our Lord asked Peter to fulfill his spiritual relationship, you are vulnerable. Peter, ultimately, was crucified.

The world we live in is wicked. Our task, like Peter’s, is to feed the sheep; to show the concern of involvement in the development for Christ, of his community, within the larger community. But never lose sight for a moment of the fact that the liberation of the spirit is sometimes accompanied, ultimately, by the bondage of the flesh. And some of us in this room today—and I feel it with a deep, deep sense of burden—live in situations where God may cause us to lay down our lives for Jesus Christ. And as you look around this room, God bless you.