DOING GOOD DOESN'T ALWAYS HELP

Posted on May 12, 2015 by Eddie

I am not calling for an end to mercy ministries. I am calling for them to be made better. I am calling for them to be more reciprocal, less one sided and thought of more as a stepping stone on the road to serious Christian discipleship within the local church.
Category: Church: UK

Not every attempt to help people actually does what it sets out to achieve. This section from a post by Mez McConnell tells a disconcerting story.

> *I used to visit all sorts of homeless projects when I lived on the streets in my late teens and early 20â€™s. Across most cities I could basically find places that would give me breakfast, clean clothes, a shower and some food. Like pubs, I had my favourite haunts. Those of us who lived and breathed within this largely invisible subculture knew all the â€˜good placesâ€™.We knew what time the doors opened, what time the â€˜good stuffâ€˜ came out and we knew what we had to say and how we had to act according to who was giving out the goodies. Churches were particularly good because the people were generally nice, they would be kind to you, they were less savvy than government agencies and all we had to do was sit through some God talk, maybe take a booklet and then we could be away for the day.* ***Although I didnâ€™t realise it at the time, these places were basically indirectly funding my drug habit and making it far easier for me to stay on the streets.*** *Without motivation to find work to pay for my survival, I lost the will and inclination to be bothered to get myself out of the hole I was in. These places had, inadvertently Iâ€™m sure, become enablers for my largely selfish, sinful and destructive lifestyle. (Emphasis, mine)*

Mez response is not to say that we should stop feeding the homeless, but to say that we need a much more intentional and integrated approach to ministry.

> *I donâ€™t have all the answers but I do think we ought to seriously visit this topic as Bible believing Christians without having knee jerk reactions. I am not calling for an end to mercy ministries. I am calling for them to be made better. I am calling for them to be more reciprocal, less one sided and thought of more as a stepping stone on the road to serious Christian discipleship within the local church.*

He also suggests that there needs to be a time of serious consultation and reflection on this topic within the church in the UK and some good guidelines produced for Churches who want to be involved in this sort of ministry. I'm not sure if anything has happened since Mez made that call, but something should.

This is one area where mission within the UK and Internationally intersect fairly closely. Much of what Mez has written could be said about Church involvements in projects around the developing world. It is much easier (and possibly more gratifying) to help people where they are, than to engage in the long journey of helping them to grow spiritually and economically.

One of my projects at the moment is working with a group of church leaders from different backgrounds, developing a set of guidelines for Churches in the UK who want to enter into cross-

cultural partnerships. The aim is to avoid some of the issues that Mez mentions in his paper. If all goes well, the guidelines should be available in the autumn.

Now please go away and read all of Mez' paper. It is excellent.Â