Empowering Destitute People
towards Shalom
A Contextual Missiological Study

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DTh Missiology
Empowering destitute people towards
Shalom
A Contextual Missiological Study
by
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submitted in accordance with the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF THEOLOGY

in the subject

MISSIOLOGY

at the

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

Promotors: Dr. Stephan de Beer; Prof. Annalet van Schalkwyk

August 2007
I declare herewith that “EMPOWERING DESTITUTE PEOPLE TOWARDS SHALOM - A CONTEXTUAL MISSIONAL STUDY” is my own work and that I have indicated all sources that I have used by means of full references.

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SIGNATURE DATE

Rev. G.J.N. Roux
Summary

This thesis proposes that the destitute people of South Africa, and specifically Tshwane, comprise an often neglected group of people that can and must be helped by means of missions with the destitute to experience growing degrees of SHALOM. Part of this would include a drive to re-integrate the destitute into society as functioning members of that society.

This is undertaken through developing a proposed model that strives to empower destitute people in a variety of ways, using a variety of “movements” and strategies. A model such as this is necessary in the light of the seeming inability of helpers (including churches, CBO’s and other non-religious organizations), to come to grips with the complex problem of destitution in our country, and in Tshwane specifically. This perceived inability is addressed by exploring the problem of destitution, in the process seeking a better understanding of a complex problem, followed by considering the responsibility of the church as missiological agent of social healing and ministry.

Missiologically, SHALOM is perceived as the aim/goal of missions with the destitute, where SHALOM refers to wellbeing, justice, relational, completeness, whole-being, peace, etc.

The model is intended to serve as a viable strategy in the arsenal of churches that take the missiological call towards social healing seriously, and to provide a comprehensive, holistic approach when dealing with the destitute.

It is postulated that the church, more than any other organization, should enjoy an advantage when it comes to social ministry, because of two reasons, namely (1) a strong missiological point of departure as a motivation to be involved in social ministry, where we see the church as a partner in the Missio Dei, and (2) a strong missiological aim, namely SHALOM, which transcends mere charity or welfare, but seeks to empower people holistically.
Key Terms

Contextualizing missions to the destitute
Continuum of empowering care
Destitute
Empower
Helpers
Internal and external factors (contributing to destitution)
Missions with…
Public church
SHALOM
Social ministry, social healing
Systemic approach
Acknowledgements

I am indebted to both my study leaders for their input into my life. You have changed my theology, my way of doing missions, and eventually also my convictions. Words cannot express the depth of my gratitude for this.

I owe a huge debt of gratitude to my wife – you sacrificed greatly in terms of time, and your personal efforts to support me in doing this study made a world of difference. You are truly a partner to walk the river with.

My mother – you encouraged me greatly every time I wanted to quit.

My children Ruvon and Shian – you are still very young, but you unknowingly sacrificed time with me so that I could study

To God, who works in us to will and to act according to His good purpose. Ultimately this study happened because the love of God empowered me, may my life manifest a strive to love God in the same way.

Johan Roux (2007)
Table of Contents

Summary ........................................................................................................................................ 4
Acknowledgements ....................................................................................................................... 6
Table of Contents .......................................................................................................................... 7

Chapter 1 – Introduction
1. My journey with destitute people – becoming aware... ..................................................................... 17
2. The purpose of this study – some personal thoughts ........................................................................ 19
3. Posing the problem ........................................................................................................................ 23
4. Hypotheses ..................................................................................................................................... 25
5. Research questions ...................................................................................................................... 26
6. Method of research ..................................................................................................................... 27
   6.1. A contextual theological approach .......................................................................................... 28
   6.2. Specific Contextualization ..................................................................................................... 30
   6.3. Using the praxis cycle ............................................................................................................. 30
       6.3.1. Insertion .......................................................................................................................... 31
       6.3.2. Analysis .......................................................................................................................... 31
       6.3.3. Reflection ...................................................................................................................... 31
       6.3.4. Planning (Pastoral Planning for action) ......................................................................... 32
   6.4. An interdisciplinary study ...................................................................................................... 32
7. Terminology – a closer look at the theme ...................................................................................... 33
   7.1. “Empowering” ...................................................................................................................... 33
   7.2. Destitute .................................................................................................................................. 35
   7.3. People ..................................................................................................................................... 36
   7.4. Towards ................................................................................................................................... 37
   7.5. SHALOM ................................................................................................................................ 37
8. Introduction to thesis .................................................................................................................... 38
9. Sources .......................................................................................................................................... 42

Chapter 2 – Why Are People Destitute?
1. Introduction ...................................................................................................................................... 43
2. Exploring causes for destitution ..................................................................................................... 44
   2.1. Morse: Destitution as the result of different categories of causal factors .............................. 44
   2.2. Lewis: Destitution as the result of “The culture of poverty” ............................................... 47
   2.3. Destitution as the result of a dysfunctional “economic ethos” ............................................. 49
   2.4. Destitution as the result of personal irresponsibility .............................................................. 50
   2.5. Christian: Destitution as the result of a complex framework of disempowerment ............. 50
   2.6. Chambers: Destitution as the result of the “Poverty Trap” .................................................. 52
   2.7. Theories about destitution as the result of marginalization .................................................. 52
3. Making sense of the different viewpoints and theories about the causes of destitution .............. 54
3.1. Looking deeper than just immediate needs for the causes of destitution 54
3.2. The causes of destitution as a two-sided coin 54
3.3. A model of possible causes for destitution 57
4. Exploring the “Inside - out” issues 60
4.1. Physical problems 60
  4.1.1. Substance abuse and addictions 61
  4.1.2. Poor physical health and illness 61
  4.1.3. Mental illness 63
  4.1.4. Physical handicaps 63
4.2. Emotional problems 63
  4.2.1. Negative childhood experiences or dysfunctional family experiences 64
  4.2.2. Abuse and domestic violence 64
  4.2.3. Trauma 66
  4.2.4. Overwhelming negative feelings 67
  4.2.5. Lack of belonging/ connectedness 67
  4.2.6. Continued rejection by people and systems (leading to distrust and self-ostracization) 68
4.3. Personal development problems 68
  4.3.1. Lack of education, knowledge and skills 69
  4.3.2. Lack of access to knowledge and information 70
  4.3.3. Lack of meaning and identity 70
  4.3.4. Lack of access to culture (including cultural values) 71
  4.3.5. Wrong worldview 72
  4.3.6. Generational carry over of “culture of poverty” tendencies 73
  4.3.7. Adaptation to life on the streets 73
4.4. Spiritual problems 73
  4.4.1. Spiritual poverty 73
  4.4.2. Personal sin and spiritual blindness 74
5. Exploring “Outside – in” issues 74
5.1. Cultural problems 74
  5.1.1. Racism, racial discrimination and racial prejudices (Apartheid) 74
  5.1.2. Public apathy 75
  5.1.3. Gender inequality 76
5.2. Institutional problems 77
  5.2.1. State failure 77
  5.2.2. Lack of appropriate social services and assistance 78
  5.2.3. Difficulty accessing systems of help 79
5.3. Global society problems 80
  5.3.1. Poverty 80
  5.3.2. Dysfunctional economic ethos 83
  5.3.3. Famine and hunger 85
  5.3.4. Disasters 85
  5.3.5. Urbanization 85
5.4. Micro-societal problems

5.4.1. Poverty in SA

5.4.2. Lack of affordable housing

5.4.3. Lack of employment

5.4.4. Urban redevelopment policies and displacement

5.4.5. Violence and crime

5.4.6. Fertility rates, mortality rates

5.4.7. Illegal immigration

5.4.7.1. Employment problems

5.4.7.2. Depressing effect on wages

5.4.7.3. Escalating crime

5.4.7.4. Overloading of education, health, housing and pension services

5.4.7.5. Escalating Government expenditure

6. Conclusion

Chapter 3 – Missions with the Destitute: Theological Perspectives

1. Introduction

2. Missions with the destitute flow from the Missio Dei

2.1. Mission as “Church with others”

2.2. Mission as mediating comprehensive salvation

2.3. Mission as the quest for justice

2.4. Mission as evangelism

2.5. Mission as liberation

2.6. Mission as hope in action

2.7. Missions as prophetic dialogue

3. Missions with the destitute as contextual mission

3.1. Understanding different ways of doing contextual theology with the destitute

3.2. Applying these models towards contextualizing missions with the destitute

3.3. Missions in the context of a Biblical understanding of poverty

3.3.1. Poverty as the result of moral lassitude

3.3.2. Poverty as the result of social factors

3.3.3. Voluntary Poverty

3.3.4. Biblical perspectives on our responsibility to the poor

3.3.5. Conclusion

4. Missions with the destitute bring about conversion

4.1. Conversion must be both personal and corporate

4.2. Conversion should be reciprocal

4.3. Conversion should be an ongoing process

5. Missions with the destitute discover SHALOM

5.1. Towards an understanding of SHALOM
Chapter 4 – Towards Understanding Destitute People

1. Introduction 156
2. The destitute are people. . 157
3. The destitute are people experiencing destitution 158
   3.1. Dimensions of powerlessness and ill-being (as opposed to SHAPE/ Wellbeing) 162
      3.1.1. Livelihoods and assets: precarious, seasonal, inadequate. 163
      3.1.2. Places of the poor: isolated, risky, unserviced and stigmatized 164
      3.1.3. The body: hungry, exhausted, sick and in poor appearance 164
      3.1.4. Gender relations: troubled and unequal 164
      3.1.5. Social relations: discriminating and isolating 165
      3.1.6. Security: lack of protection and of peace of mind 165
      3.1.7. Behaviours: disregard and abuse by those more powerful 166
      3.1.8. Institutions: disempowering and excluding 166
      3.1.9. Organizations of the poor: weak and disconnected 166
      3.1.10. Capabilities: lack of information, education, skills and confidence 166
   3.2. The challenge of powerlessness to missions with the destitute 167
4. The destitute are people experiencing needs 168
   4.1. Maslow and beyond – ideas about human motivation and needs 169
   4.2. Principles in meeting the needs of the destitute 174
5. The destitute are people with strengths and assets 176
   5.1. Why use a "strength based" approach? 176
   5.2. What strengths? 179
   5.3. Dealing with common misconceptions about strength based approaches 179
5.3.1. If we talk about strengths, we must ignore needs 179
5.3.2. We'll be manipulated and duped by clients 180
5.3.3. We'll be wasting the expertise we've accumulated in learning what is wrong with people 180
5.3.4. We'll be seen as not holding clients accountable for their behaviour 180
5.4. Conclusion 180
6. The destitute are people trying to protect their own fragile dignity 181
6.1. What is dignity? 181
6.2. Understanding the ways in which destitute people try to protect their dignity 185
6.2.1. Denial as a means of distancing 186
6.2.2. Minimizing the situation 187
6.2.3. Isolating the present 188
6.2.4. “Class” distancing 188
6.2.5. “Scapegoating” the destitute 190
6.2.6. Conclusion 191
6.3. “Missions with the destitute” means restoring human dignity 192
6.3.1. Autonomy 192
6.3.2. Predictability 192
6.3.3. Self-expression 192
6.3.4. Social solidarity 192
6.3.5. Conclusion 192
7. The destitute are people experiencing God 193
7.1. Thembi’s story 194
7.2. Lessons learned from the destitute in PopUp 196
7.2.1. Vague religiosity 197
7.2.2. God as judge 198
7.2.3. God as protector 199
7.2.4. God as comforter 201
7.2.5. God as justifier 203
7.2.6. Lessons learned from the spiritual experiences of the destitute 206
8. Conclusion 207

Chapter 5 – Towards a Model of Missions with the Destitute: Care with Others

1. Introduction 209
2. Why a model? 209
3. Underlying principles for a model of missions with the destitute 211
3.1. It must include continuous reflection and evaluation… 213
3.2. It must be comprehensive and holistic… 213
3.3. It must empower people 214
3.4. It must enable different helpers to take a hand… 216
3.5. It must allow helpers to integrate sharing faith and meeting social
needs
3.5.1. Explicit evangelism is not a part of the church’s outreach mission
3.5.2. Evangelism is valued and practised, but not in the context of
social ministry
3.5.3. Little conventional social ministry is present
3.5.4. No significant social action or evangelism
3.5.5. Evangelism and social ministry are practised
3.5.6. Conclusion
4. The model
4.1. Missionary action of three kinds
4.1.1. Missionary action to prevent people from becoming destitute
4.1.2. Missionary action to heal destitute people
4.1.3. Missionary action to stop people from becoming destitute again
4.2. Missionary action...
4.3. Missions “with” the destitute
4.4. Growth to discover and experience SHALOM more and more
4.5. Empowerment towards SHALOM
4.6. Empowerment from both the inside-out, and the outside-in
4.7. Formal and informal engagement of destitute people
4.8. Within the sphere of “God at work with people”
4.9. Naming the model
5. Conclusion

Chapter 6 – Missions with the Destitute from the
“Inside-out”
1. Introduction
2. “Inside-out” missions as the fostering of social ties
2.1. Destitution often means social isolation
2.2. Destitute people also have social ties
2.3. Conclusion
3. “Inside-out” missions as outreach and engagement
3.1. Outreach as strategy to connect helpers with destitute people
3.2. Values and principles that should govern outreach
3.3. The role of phasing in outreach and engagement
3.4. Engagement as follow-up strategy to empower destitute people
3.4.1. Stage 1 - Setting the stage
3.4.2. Stage 2 - Initial engagement tactics
3.4.3. Stage 3 – Ongoing engagement tactics
3.4.4. Stage 4 - Proceeding with the outreach/maintaining the
relationship
3.4.5. Strategies towards respectful engagement
4. “Inside-out” missions that empower people to become self motivated to
change
4.1. Understanding what motivates people
4.2. Understanding ways to motivate people

4.2.1. From external motivation to intrinsic motivation: Helping people to become self motivated

4.2.2. Using sources of intrinsic motivation towards self motivation

4.2.2.1. Commitment to an important cause

4.2.2.2. Feeling part of a valued group

4.2.2.3. Developing ownership in something really worthwhile

4.2.2.4. Having great expectations

4.2.3. Using valued strategies to help people become motivated

4.2.3.1. Generate and sustain hope

4.2.3.2. Focus on simple short term goals

4.2.3.3. Encourage creativity and risk-taking

4.2.3.4. Keep everyone involved

4.2.3.5. Give time to people

4.2.3.6. Listen and learn

4.2.4. Conclusion

5. “Inside-out” missions as the healing of people’s inner pictures

5.1. Love, position and worth

5.2. Fear, guilty, worthless

5.3. Aggressive, arrogant and self-exalted

6. “Inside-out” missions as the development of new beliefs

7. “Inside-out” missions as “giving voice” to individual destitute people

7.1. Why does “consumer involvement” matter so much?

7.2. Consumers as staff

7.3. Consumer-run programmes and organizations

7.4. Conclusion

8. Fostering helpers’ competencies in order to promote empowering “inside-out” missions

8.1. Building competency on strong values

8.1.1. Pragmatism – whatever is ethical and works

8.1.2. Competence – adding value

8.1.3. Respect – valuing diversity and individuality

8.1.3.1. Understand and value diversity

8.1.3.2. Understanding and valuing the individual

8.1.4. Genuineness – Beyond professionalism and phoniness

8.1.5. Client self-responsibility: Non-patronizing empowerment

8.2. Building competency on learned skills

8.3. Improving competency by dealing with biases

8.3.1. Conditioning

8.3.2. The desire to dominate

8.3.3. Distance

8.3.4. Denial

8.4. Greater competency for all helpers engaging the destitute

9. Conclusion
Chapter 7 - Missions with the Destitute from the “Outside-in”

1. Introduction

2. Some principles for missions from the “outside-in”
   2.1. Missions from the “outside-in” must reconnect destitute people
   2.2. Missions from the “outside-in” must promote advocacy
   2.3. Missions from the “outside-in” must be holistic and comprehensive
   2.4. Missions from the “outside-in” must happen along a continuum of care
   2.5. Missions from the “outside-in” must be strength based
   2.6. Missions from the “outside-in” must generate hope for a better future, and then realize it.
   2.7. “Outside-in” missions must promote the means to “responsible well-being”
   2.8. “Outside-in” missions must help in ways that do no harm.
   2.9. “Outside-in” missions must combat marginalization by enlarging social power

3. “Outside-in” missions as the provision of social services
   3.1. “Outside-in” missions as the connecting of destitute people to clinical services
      3.1.1. Problems with health care for destitute people
      3.1.2. What are the health problems of destitute people?
      3.1.3. Way to overcome “access barriers” to health services
         3.1.3.1. By making it easier to get to service delivery locations
         3.1.3.2. By scheduling services at times that would be most convenient for destitute people
         3.1.3.3. By helping with financial barriers to services
         3.1.3.4. By improving “cultural competence”
         3.1.3.5. By dealing positively with “disruptive behaviour”
         3.1.3.6. By using “multidisciplinary” teams
         3.1.3.7. Conclusion
   3.1.3.8. Conclusion
   3.2. “Outside-in” missions as the fostering of residential stability
      3.2.1. Fostering residential stability requires the availability of different housing options
         3.2.1.1. Supportive housing – housing combined with services
         3.2.1.2. Transitional housing
         3.2.1.3. Towards various types of permanent housing
      3.2.2. Conclusion
   3.3. Outside-in missions as reconnecting people to employment
      3.3.1. We need a comprehensive approach, involving housing and services
      3.3.2. Job training and development efforts have shown mixed results
      3.3.3. Supported employment
3.3.4. Developing affirmative businesses and in-house jobs offer market alternatives

3.3.5. Job turnover is common, and even after obtaining jobs, many people remain economically vulnerable

3.4. CTI as a social services strategy to be used as part of “outside-in” missions

4. “Outside-in” missions as the empowerment of communities

4.1. “Development” vs. “livelihoods”

4.2. Principles for community empowerment

4.2.1. Community empowerment must aim to improve livelihoods

4.2.2. Community empowerment must be in line with the people of the community

4.2.3. Community empowerment must promote equity and justice

4.2.4. Community empowerment must handle resistance

4.2.5. Community empowerment must be driven from the bottom up

4.2.6. Community empowerment must foster participation

4.2.7. Community empowerment must promote sustainable livelihoods

4.2.8. Community empowerment must be faith based

4.2.9. Community empowerment must be comprehensive

4.2.10. Community empowerment must be asset based

4.2.10.1. What assets should helpers look for?

4.2.10.1.1. Human capital

4.2.10.1.2. Social capital

4.2.10.1.3. Natural capital

4.2.10.1.4. Physical capital

4.2.10.1.5. Financial capital

4.2.10.1.6. Spiritual capital

4.2.10.1.7. Visionary capital

4.2.10.2. Strategies to promote asset based community empowerment

4.2.10.2.1. Discover assets...

4.2.10.2.1.1. Through outreach and engagement

4.2.10.2.1.2. Through the collecting of stories

4.2.10.2.2. Map assets...

4.2.10.2.2.1. Identify associations (relatedness)

4.2.10.2.2.2. Identify individual gifts, skills, and capacities

4.2.10.2.2.3. Identify the assets of local institutions

4.2.10.2.2.4. Identify physical assets and natural resources

4.2.10.2.2.5. Mapping the local economy

4.2.10.2.2.6. Building and strengthening partnerships among local assets for mutually beneficial problem solving within the community

4.2.10.2.3. Mobilize assets...
4.2.10.2.3.1. By organizing a core group 311
4.2.10.2.3.2. By convening as broadly representative a group as possible to build a community vision and plan 311
4.2.10.2.3.3. By mobilizing assets for community development 312
4.2.11. Community empowerment must combat marginalization 313
4.3. Community empowerment through caring for the environment 313
5. Conclusion 315

Chapter 8 – The Way Forward
1. Introduction 316
2. Understand the complexity of the problems faced by destitute people 316
3. Understand the obligation upon us as helpers 318
4. Grow in understanding of destitute people 319
5. Doing missions with the destitute by creating a continuum of empowering care 321
6. Conclusion 326

Bibliography 327
Chapter 1 – Introduction

1 My journey with destitute people – becoming aware…

As the minister of a rural congregation in Estcourt I met the occasional “nomadic destitute person,” as they travelled through our town to the warmer weather of Durban for the winter. I always wondered about them: why do they choose this life, do they have any choice, how must we help them, what is the role of the church in their lives, in fact, what is the role of God in their lives? I felt a real desire to help, to bring about an authentic, permanent change in people’s lives, to help them experience something of God’s desire for His children, but I didn’t know how.

These and other questions plagued my mind as I wrestled with the role of the congregation in these people’s lives. We tried to help where possible, providing food and the occasional overnight shelter. I personally had numerous discussions, most of them theological in nature, with a variety of destitute people, and in my ignorance I usually focused on the spiritual problem to the exclusion of the rest of the problems. Many were “converted” in this way in the religious sense of the word; how many are following Christ today is another matter entirely.

I also came to realize that a person with an empty stomach does not listen well, even to a message as important as the gospel. In this way I started to learn something of a holistic approach in helping people. Slowly a more structured way of helping these people emerged, and today there is a good programme running in Estcourt, one that helps destitute and poor people in a variety of ways.

At the same time I developed a personal conviction surrounding a move into the city, since I began to develop an interest in urban ministry. This led to my arrival in the city of Tshwane (Pretoria at that time), where I was offered a position in Popup, an “upliftment” project. The project focused on the development of destitute people. My initial task was to provide counselling in the project. This developed into managing the
“upliftment course.” Later on the “upliftment course” became a development programme with a multidisciplinary team and a variety of different activities. We moved away from the term upliftment, since the word itself already carries negative connotations (“I, the one who has it, stands up here and helps you to get here as well”). I managed the development part of the project, and derived great satisfaction from the work. While working at Popup, I observed that, seemingly, some destitute people really want to change, grow and improve. However, it also seemed that some chose to remain in a state of destitution. This opened up a “Pandora’s box” of questions: why would they choose to remain in such a state? Is it because of the fact that they choose the reality they know best? Or because they have lost all hope? Or because of a lack of necessary skills to cope in a complex world? These questions urged me to explore – leading, eventually, to this thesis.

My involvement with Popup led to a move where I became more fully involved with community development, both via my local congregation, as well as through Pretoria Destitute Association, for which I served as director, and in the capacity of consultant and project manager.

At the same time, government established an action committee to design a viable policy to address the problem of destitution. I was chosen to serve on this action committee, and later on to lead this for a short period of time.

Thereafter I started serving in an urban congregation (Alberton), specifically in the areas of human and community development and empowerment. This congregation is an independent church, working with a model called “the seven dimensions”. It is a very practical way of making sure that people’s needs are addressed holistically, simply by addressing every area of their lives. This serves to empower them to lead the lives they choose, and, in the context of my own belief, to fulfil the purpose God has for them.

All this led to a focus on two main areas of concern where the destitute are concerned. Firstly, I am very much interested in the development of destitute people, and
secondly, I firmly believe that reconnection to a good “community” (a community of care that provides empowerment through support) plays a cardinal part in this development; since I believe people can only function fully within good “community”. I see the church as such a community, a community of care in action, but then an empowering care, not care that creates dependency.

This study is therefore also the story of my own growing understanding of destitute people, and of how to assist them better in their quest (for SHALOM). It is furthermore an attempt to share the insights I have gained in working with destitute people, so that others can benefit as well.

In my journey with destitute people, I have come to know God better, by starting to understand His love for people better. May we all grow through our various journeys.

2 The purpose of this study – some personal thoughts

When thinking about destitute people, I immediately reflect on two things/ issues, namely why, and how?

The why simply deals with “why do people become destitute?” There is no simple answer to this question, and I have made some discoveries during my journey with the destitute that have altered my perspective and thinking. I found this simple question to interconnect with a number of different issues, issues that meet when we talk about the destitute, interrelated/ interconnected issues. In this sense I believe the problem of being destitute to be systemic: it seems to be the product of the sinful and broken world we live in, and the actions and reactions of broken people in this broken world.

Seltser and Miller, in their book *Homeless families*, struggle with these same questions, and I found my own struggles echoed in their words over and over again. I use a number of their insights (among others) in developing and eventually verbalizing my own thoughts.
In grappling to gain a better understanding of the causes of destitution, I finally distinguished between external and internal factors contributing to destitution. In a way these can be understood as “causes” but they are more than that. External factors deal with “causes and factors of destitution that function mostly from ‘Outside’ a person to promote destitution”. These refer mostly to social factors, things outside of a person’s direct control. Internal factors stem from “causes and factors of destitution that function mostly from ‘Inside’ a person to promote destitution”. I realize that this separation is artificial and possibly academic, yet it helps me to better define and understand the complex systemic causes of destitution.

The how deals with “how do we help destitute people not to be destitute anymore, and not to become destitute again?” For me, this is firstly a theological issue: the Bible has much to say about helping the poor and advocating social justice. However, the issue is also a multidisciplinary one, since interventions to help destitute people take insights from various disciplines.

This study has been a personal journey of discovery, reflection, and often repentance. It has been a journey of broken-heartedness. It is the result of trying to understand, and working towards making a difference to the one person, within his or her community…

This thesis concerns destitute people, but it is addressed to those who are fortunate enough not to be destitute. It is a study examining events that author and reader alike will probably never experience, about struggles most of us will never live through. Although I will be pleased if destitute people read these pages, the study is written not to them, but about them and for them.

The difference between the reader and the destitute subjects creates both possibility and peril. The distance allows us (both author and reader) to stand back from the subjects’ painful and frightening experiences, to gain some perspective on the recent increase in the number of destitute people and families, to think through the implications of our response to destitution, and then to empathetically identify with the lives of
destitute people. Indeed, this thesis attempts precisely that, to take a small step toward breaking down the barriers to understanding and compassion.

However, the distance also creates the danger that we will remain aloof, considering these experiences to be so alien to our experience as to be either unintelligible or unworthy of serious concern. After all, for those likely to read this dissertation, life is too steady, predictable, and balanced to allow easy identification with the lives of destitute families. Just as we are tempted to cross to the other side of the street when confronting a destitute person who might make some demand on us, so we may avert our attention from the social and economic factors that create destitution.

The greatest challenge in writing this has been to find a way to reaffirm the distance and the identification, the uniqueness and the universality of the experiences I seek to describe. Most of us have never been destitute, are unlikely to become destitute, and cannot easily put ourselves in the shoes of destitute people and know what their lives are like.

But, at the same time, there are elements in the experiences of destitute persons with which we can identify. Elements such as the challenges of life, financial trouble, feeling alone, and the whole range of feelings people experience when going through trauma. The task is to translate these experiences into our language, to find the common denominators of our lives that allow us to recognize that what is happening to them is a quintessentially human experience. Those of us reading this book may not be destitute, but we are nevertheless susceptible to life threatening diseases and experiences that challenge our self-sufficiency and reveal our personal vulnerability.

This study combines empirical and moral analysis in order for us both to understand some of the experiences of destitute families and also to ask ourselves what these experiences can and should mean to us as citizens of South Africa today. In collecting the data for this book, I have attempted to observe the canons of impartial social science research. But I also believe that interpretation of data inevitably is undertaken from a
vision of what is desirable and humanly possible. Indeed, the greatest figures in sociology have all possessed a moral vision of what constitutes a good society.

Therefore, rather than grudgingly admit that description is always tinged with prescription, I self-consciously examine destitution from a moral perspective. For instance, I am interested in the ways in which destitution attacks the dignity of its victims and the ways in which mediating institutions, such as shelters or the social service system, either restores dignity to destitute families or else contributes to the attack on their dignity. Thus my approach moves back and forth between description and prescription, in part because of my conviction that social problems such as destitution require both careful description and impassioned critical response.

A few years ago I became fascinated and troubled by the growing problem of destitution, particularly by the apparent increase in the number of destitute families. My interest was very personal. In crossing paths with these “pilgrims of life”, I was frustrated by my disability to really make any difference of a permanent nature – it was not enough to give handouts, because the problem of destitution persisted.

I acknowledge a more basic – and more troubling – motivation for addressing this problem: namely, my own personal responses to confronting individual destitute people in daily life. I was uncomfortable with my feelings of discomfort and embarrassment and by my all-too-common reactions of denial and avoidance. Do you give money when approached on the street or when called on the phone by an advocacy group? Do you talk to someone who is sleeping on a street grate?

I suspect that these tensions apply to most of the people in our society as well. The ways in which most of us are confronted with the problem of destitute people are not conducive to easy solutions or moralistic arguments on either side. And this is precisely why it is important to take the time to look directly at the experiences of destitute people in terms of what they can tell us about our own values. Our response in morally ambiguous situations is the best gauge of our underlying ethical commitments; nothing is
likely to challenge a comfortable self-assured ethical identity as much as a sudden and uncomfortable confrontation with someone who is destitute and hungry as we are leaving a restaurant or are on our way to a secure job or the comforts of a home.

Examining the experiences of destitute people reveals a great deal about our social and political culture/structure. I believe in the old truism that a society can ultimately be judged by the way it treats those at the bottom of its social structure, and destitute families represent that population in stark ways. They are really the most vulnerable among us, with little power and few resources to take control of their lives. How we (both as individuals and as a society) respond to them speaks directly to the actual moral commitments we are prepared to embody in our lives. The choices are not easy, of course, and the policy decisions are seldom clean. But the mere existence of families struggling in extreme poverty challenges many assumptions about our country and our way of life.

My hope is that this study will eventually both inform and motivate readers to respond to the poorest members of our society. The voices of the destitute women and men in these pages can help us understand ourselves and our moral commitments as well as what it means to experience poverty and destitution. I do not claim to be responding more “correctly” than anyone else. Indeed, it is precisely my many personal failings in this regard that enable me to share some of what I have learned about the experience of being destitute – and some of the moral implications of that awareness.

3 Posing the problem
People working with the destitute frequently request information. How do you do it, where do you get funding, what exactly do you do with your participants? Centres, programmes and projects helping people, specifically destitute people, are currently being run all over the country, as the church (in some places), and individual believers start to understand something of the heart of God for the poorest of the poor.
The problem is simply that, at least in our country, South Africa, there are few or no solid theological guidelines to guide helpers (including churches, CBO’s, NGO’s and even individuals); it is mostly a case of every person on his/her own mission. There is a need for solid missiological guidelines in this area.

Furthermore, there is also a need to learn from one another, so that we do not repeat mistakes, but rather improve the quality of the work that is done in the name of the Lord.

Church-based interventions usually lack in sociological and psychological know-how when it comes to helping the destitute, leading to an inability to integrate successfully and holistically a programme of care.

Added to this is the unique political and economical situation of South Africa, which raises the question of how CBO’s must deal with the destitute in this context, in a holistic programme.

In working with the destitute, I have been approached frequently with the request “help us start a shelter/programme in…”, or questions about the “how” of comprehensive holistic interventions. From these and other similar requests in the same vein, I perceive that there is a problem; there is a need to know more about how to help destitute people, especially by establishing holistic programmes of care through, for instance, “shelters” and other programmes. I specifically refer to church-based organizations.

The difficulty can be narrowed down even further with a specific focus on destitute or homeless people, such as the people who usually end up in shelters or programmes of various kinds, the “outies” as they call themselves. I am convinced that empowering these people will definitely work towards transforming the communities in which they live and function, a premise for which I can state numerous cases as proof. Like the case of the participant, who came off the street, became a resident in Popup, went through the programme, and today is the chairperson for “The alliance for street
children.” Or the case of a lady of 60 years old who nearly died after trying to commit suicide, yet who now runs the medical clinic in Popup. These are but two examples of empowered people who are now “transforming” the communities in which they function.

This “empowerment” obviously takes place within a specific context; in this case that of urban South Africa, and my own specific context is the urban environment of Pretoria and Johannesburg, cities in the province of Gauteng, within South Africa. My context is also that of a church-based NGO company, starting off with Popup as a project, and later on projects developed from the platform of an affluent church in Alberton, called Alberton Lewensentrum.

This brings us to the theme “Empowering destitute people towards transforming communities”, as well as to my hypothesis.

4 Hypotheses

In this thesis I will proceed from the premise that the destitute can best be helped in a community of care that applies an integrated model of intervention. I will work towards such a model, which I will call a “continuum of empowering care”. This model should incorporate both approaches that work from the “outside-in” as well as from the “inside-out” to empower destitute people.

This raises the aspect of empowerment in a multidisciplinary context. For Christian care workers there is much to be learned from disciplines other than theology so as to better understand how best to empower people. A great deal can be gained from the fields of sociology, social welfare, occupational therapy, pastoral therapy, psychology, psychiatry and even project management to assist in developing an understanding of how best to assist destitute people to be empowered.

For me “empowering care” is the very essence of our missiological task – by helping people to be empowered, we are discipling them to become what God wants them to be. And in the process, as people are empowered, their lives will undoubtedly
transform the community in some way; and in a reciprocal relationship, the communities of care in which they function will transform them.

In summary I will work towards the development of a model called a “continuum of empowering care”, within a multidisciplinary context, but with a missiologically strong focus on an understanding of destitution. The theological themes that will guide me can best be encapsulated by the term SHALOM.

The approach that I would like to follow to the problem of empowering people towards transforming communities can most precisely be captured by the Afrikaans phrase “‘n Heel mens wat toegerus is om sy/haar wêreld te verander” (A whole person that has been empowered to change his/ her world).

5 Research questions

Following from the posing of the problem and hypothesis, a number of research questions may be asked:

1. Why do people become destitute? Which are the different problems and factors which dynamically interact to cause destitution?
2. Why do some people rather than others become destitute under the same circumstances?
3. What are the experiences of the destitute? In order to be able really to help the latter, we must reach some understanding of their experiences, and the motivation behind their conduct.
4. How can the destitute be helped, internally, to face their problems and become motivated to change?
5. How can we best help the destitute to grow or develop? In doing so, we must assist them towards personal development, because “when a person is developed, he [sic] becomes creative, and a creative person can make something out of nothing” (Manalisi Deka, during the IUM Winter school Conference, Pretoria, 4 July 2003.)
6. What can be done towards the economic empowerment of the destitute? Hand in hand with personal development is economic empowerment.

7. How can the destitute be empowered through partaking in communities of care (i.e. CBO’s), and re-integrated into society?

8. How can we best develop a sound missiological framework to motivate and equip organizations, specifically church-based ones, to work with destitute people?

9. How can a model of empowering care as regards the destitute be created by drawing on various disciplines, such as sociology, social welfare, occupational therapy, pastoral therapy, psychology, psychiatry, project management, human development, community development, missiology, development theory and theology?

10. Which method of theological research will be most appropriate to explore the creation of models of care, for the destitute, which can be used by CBO’s?

Insights gained in researching the above hypothesis must eventually lead to transformed praxis, where we do differently because we understand differently.

6 Method of research

I intend to use a contextual theological approach in doing this research. In order to facilitate such an approach, I will employ the “Praxis Cycle” as used and advocated by IUM (The Institute of Urban Ministry)\(^1\). This method was developed and contextualized, being based on the work of Holland and Henriot (1984), and adapted by Cochrane, De Gruchy & Petersen (1991), in the South African context.

6.1 A contextual theological approach

The intention of devising a contextual theological approach is reflected in the theme of the thesis as “a contextual missiological study”. The starting point for such an approach

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\(^1\) The Institute of Urban Ministry is an organization centred in Pretoria, South Africa. This Institute offers a community of hope, support and learning for the urban church, by providing structured academic courses. IUM focuses on:
- Training for Urban Ministry
- Networking the Urban Church
- Resources and Publications
http://www.tlf.org.za/ium.htm
lies in the fact that I have strong personal viewpoints and approaches when it comes to helping the poor and destitute.

These viewpoints are based on the gospels, where Jesus was sent with a mission, one spelled out in Luke 4: 18 – 19:

18 The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, Because he anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor: He hath sent me to proclaim release to the captives, And recovering of sight to the blind, To set at liberty them that are bruised, 19 To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.

Following from this stems the viewpoint that we are sent today to continue this mission (John 20:21: “Jesus therefore said to them again, Peace be unto you: as the Father hath sent me, even so send I you.”), and in that sense we are directly participating in the mission of Jesus, as well as in the Missio Dei. Both church and mission have their source in the loving will of God. The members of the Church, those who are called to be God's people, are the agents of mission. Through these "jars of clay" God carries out His plan for the world: “The church must regard herself as the carrier of the message to the world.” (Bosch 1991, 47)

In this regard the definition of “Missiology” as stipulated in the “Algemene sendingreglement” (General Missions Manifest) of the Dutch Reformed Church, is helpful. It states that mission is:

“Die handeling van die drie Enige God (Vader, Seun en Heilige Gees)
met die mens en die wêreld, waardeur Hy
(uit die ganse menslike geslag)
vir Hom 'n gemeente (deur Sy Woord en Sy Gees), vergader,
deur wie Hy Sy Woord laat verkondig (aan die gevalle wêreld),
die gemeenskap van die Heiliges tot stand bring, (uit alle nasies en volke), en
diens laat lewer (aan die wêreld in sy nood),
tot die uitbreiding van God’s koninkryk tot met die voleinding.”
(Kritzinger, 1988, 36 – 38)

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Dynamically translated, this statement defines missions as follows:

“Mission is an activity by the Triune God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) [thus the Missio Dei], with people and the world, through which He (from all of humanity), gathers for Himself a congregation (through His Word and Spirit), and through which He proclaims His Word (to the fallen world), through which He establishes the community of the Saints (from every nation), and through which He causes service to be done (to the world in need), to build the Kingdom of God until the end of all things.”

However, a problem created by this definition centres on the term “fallen world”. It almost seems as if we, the missionaries, bring God to the destitute, while it is often the other way around. We often find God already there when we engage them. The Missio Dei implies that it is God’s mission, He goes out in front of us, to meet us there. This makes mission a reciprocal activity. In this regard Lutheran missiologist James Scherer (1992:173) states:

...missiology’s primary task is the study of the mission of the Triune God, and within that, of the mission of Jesus, the Apostles, the church(es), and mission-sending bodies. This means that missiology is the study of God’s mission everywhere — in all 6 continents, ‘from everywhere to everywhere’ — certainly no longer concentrated on sending from the West.

Yet another viewpoint holds that the Bible lays a clear obligation on every believer to help the poor, including (on one side of the spectrum), direct personal and individual intervention, as well as (on the other side of the spectrum), advocating social justice as a means of addressing the plight of the poor in a broader sense. However, this obligation is perceived as a “journey with…”, and not a “journey to…”

Furthermore, in the footsteps of Abraham (1989:34), I define evangelism as initiating people into the kingdom of God. At the same time I feel very strongly about the concept “comprehensive salvation”.

Bosch (1991) takes the matter a step further in writing:

In a postmodern paradigm of mission and salvation, we need an interpretation of salvation which operates within a comprehensive christological framework, one which makes the totus Christus – his incarnation, death, resurrection and parousia indispensable for mission and theology. In the light of such a
framework, it makes sense to identify the mediating of comprehensive and integral salvation/liberation as the purpose of mission in a way that overcomes the inherent dualism of both the traditional and modern models of salvation. We should find a way to move beyond every schizophrenic and reductionist position and minister to people in their total need, and we should be involved with individuals as well as with society, with both soul and body, and with the present and future in our ministry of salvation (Bosch 1991: 398-399).

I therefore make use of my personal missiology as a starting point for any intervention with the poor. To state this differently:

“It is because I love God that I want to become involved. It is because God changed me that I must be involved. It is because I try to see people the way God looks at us that I do not judge, but rather strive to help. It is because I often find God in the faces of the destitute when least expected that I am compelled to journey with them. It is because I believe God intends true SHALOM for His people that I try to help destitute people to understand and experience their personal version of SHALOM”.

6.2 Specific contextualization
In terms of contextualization, I write from experiences gained in a specific context, namely, as mentioned, an urban context in South Africa, specifically in Gauteng, and even more specifically, in Pretoria and Alberton. I focus on destitution in South Africa, while continuously reflecting on my experiences in a specific context. I also write from the perspective of a church-based organization/s striving to address a very real need in a broken world. This context had and still has a major effect on my beliefs, perspectives and approaches, as reflected in the writing of this thesis.

6.3 Using the praxis cycle
The “Praxis Cycle”, as a way of doing contextual theological research, utilizes four phases in its method, namely:

6.3.1 Insertion
Insertion takes place by means of personal experiences during my work experience in Estcourt, Popunt, and currently Alberton, over a combined period of 10 years, as well as interviews with destitute people. It therefore stands to reason that insertion includes my
own interpretations of matters regarding destitution, based on personal experience and reflection.

My personal interest and concern regarding destitution increased when I was confronted with the problem of destitution in a rural congregation in Estcourt a number of years ago. Thereafter I became involved in Popup, an “upliftment” project operating in the City of Tshwane, in a full-time capacity. I was specifically involved in the daily counselling and development of destitute people. The project housed up to 150 destitute people at any given time.

From there I moved to Alberton, where I became involved in a non-denominational church called Alberton Lewensentrum. Part of my current job description centres on community outreach and welfare. In working with destitute people over the years, many of their questions became mine, and my desire to discover practical, holistic and missiologically sound answers to their plight has grown.

6.3.2 Analysis
The problem of destitution is a complex problem caused by many varied and dynamically interactive factors. Analyzing the problem includes defining the internal and external factors contributing to destitution. Therefore I indicate the dynamic systemic interaction between different factors contributing to destitution. Specific focus is accorded to the South African political and economic context. From this analysis a model of holistic care is developed in order to address the problem of destitution.

6.3.3 Reflection
In developing a model of care for church-based organizations, I reflect in a multidisciplinary way in the light of my missiological focus, aiming to explore the reasons for destitution, and possibilities for successful intervention. I develop a theology of missions to the destitute. SHALOM is explored as the missiological aim of intervention with the destitute.
I employ literature studies, interviews and personal experiences in order to reflect on helping the destitute. I do this in a multi-disciplinary way, incorporating insights from various related fields of study into the reflection.

### 6.3.4 Planning (Pastoral planning for action)

In planning for action, I develop a comprehensive and holistic model of care intended for use primarily by CBO’s in helping the destitute. This model is unpacked in three major movements, namely prevention, treatment and aftercare. In describing the given model, I explore practical suggestions as solutions to the problems surrounding destitution. The model is developed with dynamic application in mind: different CBO’s should be able to apply this model in a specific way in their specific context. In the final chapter the different aspects of the model are brought together in a way that makes it possible to apply the model to different contexts.

### 6.4 An interdisciplinary study

Following a very strong contextual missiological starting point facilitated by the use of the Praxis Cycle, it must also be said that any kind of intervention that promotes empowering the destitute, even interventions traditionally associated with other disciplines, fits into my framework of helping the destitute. Therefore this study is interdisciplinary, in the sense employed earlier.

I use insights from social sciences, sociology, psychology, public theology, pastoral therapy, occupational therapy, social welfare, missiology, project management, psychiatry, medical and health science and practical theology in doing this research.

The question can be posed, “Why is this a missiological study, and not a practical theology study?” The answer is simple, and personal. I believe that this study fits best in the field of missiology, even though it makes use of many insights from the field of practical theology especially. Personally, I view interventions that help the poor as the continuing of the Missio Dei (as stated above); therefore my study may be described as missiological.
I also believe that academic disciplines, and especially the theological ones, do not stand alone, but overlap and interact, as is clearly the case with missiology, practical theology and other fields in this thesis.

And lastly, IUM (the Institute of Urban Mission) was the institution where I found a personal home and place of reflection towards helping the destitute; therefore it logically follows that I would choose to place my study where I feel more at home, namely with a missiological institution.

7 Terminology – a closer look at the theme

The theme was developed with a specific aim in mind; therefore it is necessary to reflect clearly on what I mean by every word in the theme. To accomplish this, I look at each word as it is currently understood in the English language, adding to this my own perspectives and understanding, while also drawing on a Biblical understanding of certain words and concepts where necessary.

The sub theme (A Contextual Missiological Study), needs to be explained first, since it creates the background for the rest of the theme.

7.1 “Empowering”

Mere charity and handouts would not do the job of enabling the destitute not to be destitute anymore; consequently an empowering approach is needed. An “empowering” approach is explored in greater detail in chapter 5.

The Merriam Webster OnLine dictionary (http://www.m-w.com/) defines empower as “Enable, to promote the self-actualization or influence, to authorize, delegate authority, permit”.

Enable, in the same dictionary, is defined as “to make able, give means or power to…, to make possible or more easy”.
The Readers Digest Word Power Dictionary adds an interesting perspective in the words “Give strength and confidence to…”

Some reflection on the Biblical use of this word could richly add to the meaning. “Dunamoo” is defined as “to be able, to cause someone to have the ability to do or to experience something – ‘to make someone able, to give capability to, to enable, to strengthen, to empower, to make sufficient, to qualify” (Louw & Nida, 1989:676).

Scriptural examples of this denotation include Col. 1:11, “…being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might”, or Phil. 4:13, “I can do all things by the one who makes me able” or ‘I am able to face anything by the one who makes me able (to do it)” (Louw & Nida 1989: 676).

In summary, the word “empower” in the context of this study means:

- The action, series of actions or process whereby…
- A person is assisted, enabled, equipped, authorized, given strength and confidence to, permitted, made sufficient, qualified or given the power and strength to…
- Grow, develop or be transformed…
- From being destitute to SHALOM.

I approach empowerment in a holistic way, meaning that the aim is to empower the complete person in his or her complete world or existence.

I also approach empowerment in a missiological way, meaning that people can only truly be empowered if they are reconciled with God, and if they find their purpose in God. In this regard the word “SHALOM” becomes important, because it states the aim of empowerment in the context of this study in the best way. It receives detailed attention in a later chapter; however, the broad concept must already be touched upon in this chapter, in the light of the missiological nature of the study.
7.2 Destitute

In undertaking the research for this study, I encountered the word “homeless” as the word that is usually used for the poorest of the poor. Yet this seems too narrow a term to encapsulate the problems of being destitute. I see “homelessness” as part of being destitute, but “destitute” as referring to much more than mere homelessness. A destitute person is usually homeless as well, but homelessness is just one of the many visible manifestations of destitution. In moving away from the term “homeless” to the broader term “destitute”, the researcher attempts to place the focus on the various different problems that together make a person destitute, as opposed to homelessness which may draw attention towards a narrower understanding of “being without a home/shelter”.

The Merriam Webster OnLine dictionary (http://www.m-w.com/), defines destitute as “not having or possessing, entirely lacking with, of, being in want, extremely poor, desolate, forsaken without food, shelter etc., completely impoverished, lacking”.

*The Readers Digest Word Power Dictionary* adds to this definition in the words “extremely poor and lacking the means to provide for oneself, down and out, forsaken, broken down”.

In summary, destitution is understood (in my own words) to refer to “People who are lacking the basic means of human existence, and are therefore wanting, because they are extremely poor, this condition being the result of (1) personal factors such as wrong choices, underdeveloped coping skills, family situations etc., or (2) social factors, where society abuses people etc., in the process breaking them down, deserting and abandoning them, or because they are marginalized, once again resulting in their being extremely poor”.

In addition, the condition of being “destitute” causes a whole range of personal and social problems, ranging from a breakdown in self-image, to the inability to break out of the vicious circle of poverty.
In biblical terms, the word “poor” best encapsulates the concept of “being destitute”. It is therefore prudent to include a study of the words “poor” and “poverty”. This is done in a later chapter.

### 7.3 People

Even though the word “people” is a collective term, in this context I use it to refer to any number of individual persons with whom I come into contact while engaging the destitute. Together, I refer to these individuals as people.

In this study, the focus falls firstly on the individual, not on the community. The premise is that if we can manage to empower individual people (at the micro level), they can then become “disciples” who can influence their communities, thus slowly transforming that community (on the macro level).

Therefore the emphasis is very much on personal development. While this includes economic empowerment, the current thesis will not deal with the issue of economic empowerment in any real detail, which is another study. Yet the issue is touched upon.

The reason for this concentration on personal, individual development, can, in my understanding, best be summed up by the words of Manalisi Deka, a Masters student with IUM, during the July 2003 Winter School conference of IUM, that I already quoted earlier: “When we develop people, they become creative, and a creative person can make something out of nothing!”

This concept is expressed by Adams and Spencer (1986:5), who draw a distinction between a reactive style of thinking and behaviour, and a creative style (noting, en passant, that the two words “reactive and creative” are made up of the same letters, and the only difference between the two is that you “C” (see) differently!).
Every individual forms part of a community, or even communities. As such, individual people exert an influence, however small that influence might be, on their communities. This study does not attempt to evaluate or incorporate developmental models or issues on the level of community development, but on the micro level as these issues and models apply to the individual.

At the same time the impact of communities on the individuals constituting those communities cannot be neglected. Whether the destitute are part of a community (however fragmented), or must be reconnected to communities, their being part of a community of care must play an important role in empowering them. Therefore community development approaches must be viewed as constituting part of a comprehensive holistic model of care for the destitute. This matter is addressed in Chapter 7, under the heading “Missions with the destitute from the outside-in”. Hence, even though the focus of this study falls on empowering individual destitute people, community is seen as an integral part of that empowerment.

7.4 Towards

While it is not necessary to explain the meaning of the word “towards”, it must be noted that, in the context of this study, it implies the movement that is contained in the “action – reflection – action” movement of the pastoral cycle.

The study focuses on the individual, and on helping individual destitute people to change, grow, develop and experience greater degrees of SHALOM. The word “towards” communicate this intentionality in our efforts at missions with the destitute.

7.5 SHALOM

Empowerment with aim is like hitting out in the dark. Biblically, and from a Christian viewpoint, the aim of empowerment must be SHALOM. As a word, SHALOM is loaded with rich meaning, and it incorporates terms such as liberation, wellbeing, salvation, completeness, whole-being and others.
SHALOM (š_lôm) is the Old Testament word for completeness, soundness and well-being (*New Bible Dictionary* 1996:956). In the words of Hoekendjik (1966:107):

It is used to indicate all aspects of the restored and cured human condition: righteousness, truth, fellowship, communication, peace, and so forth (cf Ps 85). Shalom is the briefest and, at the same time, the fullest summary of all the gifts of the messianic era: even the name of the Messiah can simply be: shalom (Micah 5:3; Eph 2:4); the gospel is a gospel of SHALOM (Eph 6:15) and the God proclaimed in this gospel can often be called the God of SHALOM.

In Hoekendjik’s understanding (1966:107) SHALOM is more than intra-personal peace of mind (although it includes this aspect). It is not something that the “haves” can dish out to the “have nots”. It is a *social happening*, an event in inter-human relations, a venture of co-humanity. It cannot be reduced to a simple formula. It must be found and worked out in actual situations, in cooperation with those for whom SHALOM is destined.

Regarding SHALOM and the poor, the remarks of Botha (1994:118 – 120) are particularly important.

At the Melbourne conference of the CWME in 1980, this comprehensive understanding of liberation on earth was taken even further as it focused on the poor of the world. The poor were put at the very centre of missiological thinking. It was among the poor that the Kingdom of God has to come and liberation has to be realised (:118-120).

Lastly, in connection with the term “empowerment”, we must take into consideration the fact that empowered people will also, simultaneously, be transformed.

**8 Introduction to thesis**

I divide the thesis both indirectly (into the four major movements of the Praxis cycle), and directly (into different chapters).

The Praxis cycle comprises:

- Insertion
- Analysis
- Reflection
The thesis comprises the following chapters:

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<th>Insertion…</th>
<th>Analysis</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter 1 - Defining the problem</strong>&lt;br&gt;This serves as a testimony of a personal journey with destitute people, which urged me to greater involvement in the problem of destitution. The chapter then continues to explore the theme “Empowering destitute people – a contextual missiological study”, while simultaneously posing the aim of the study.</td>
<td>1. Exploring causes for destitution&lt;br&gt;2. Making sense of the different viewpoints and theories about the causes of destitution&lt;br&gt;3. Exploring the “Inside-out” issues&lt;br&gt;4. Exploring the “Outside-in” issues</td>
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<th>Reflection</th>
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<td><strong>Chapter 3 – Missions with the destitute</strong>&lt;br&gt;This chapter explores an approach that advocates missions with the destitute, as opposed to “mission to the destitute”. It</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Missions with the destitute flow from the Missio Dei&lt;br&gt;2. Missions with the destitute as contextual mission</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
explores different aspects of such missions. It anchors the aim of such missions in SHALOM and then calls for a public church that would practise such missions.

3. Missions with the destitute bring about conversion
4. Missions with the destitute discover Shalom
5. Missions with the destitute require a public church

Planning for action

Chapter 4 – Towards understanding destitute people
This chapter explores the experiences of destitute people, in order to facilitate a better understanding of their problems.

It then advocates an approach to missions with the destitute that would see and treat destitute people as people with dignity, needs, strengths and feelings, as well as experiences of God. It then advocates the use of what destitute people already possess in order to empower them.

1. The destitute are people…
2. The destitute are people experiencing destitution
3. The destitute are people experiencing needs
4. The destitute are people with strengths and assets
5. The destitute are people trying to protect their own fragile dignity
6. The destitute are people experiencing God

Chapter 5 – Towards a model of missions with the destitute
This chapter serves to furnish perspectives and guidelines for “helpers” engaging the destitute, by developing a model of missions with the latter.

1. Why a model?
2. Underlying principles for a model of missions with the destitute
3. The model

Chapter 6 – Missions with the destitute from the inside-out
This chapter investigates ways to empower

1. “Inside-out” missions as the fostering of social ties
2. “Inside-out” missions as outreach
destitute people on the inside, so that they would be better able to face external challenges, or to grow to SHALOM. The focus falls strongly on internal empowerment, with the understanding that this kind of empowerment works from the “inside-out” to address issues of destitution.

Chapter 7 – Missions with the destitute from the “outside-in”

This chapter considers strategies and interventions that would empower destitute people by creating an external environment or situation that would enable them to grow, change, develop and become whole, as they choose to. The focus is strongly on external empowerment. Two kinds of “outside-in” approaches to mission with the destitute are explored, namely (1) community development approaches to “outside-in” missions, and (2) clinical services approaches to “outside-in” missions (including social welfare).

| 1. Some principles for missions from the “outside-in” | 3. “Inside-out” missions that empower people to become self-motivated to change |
| 2. “Outside-in” missions as the provision of social services | 4. “Inside-out” missions as the healing of people’s inner pictures |
| 3. “Outside –in” missions as reconnecting people to employment | 5. “Inside-out” missions as the development of new beliefs |
| 4. “Outside-in” missions as the empowerment of communities | 6. “Inside-out” missions as “giving voice” to individual destitute people |
| 7. Fostering helpers’ competencies in order to promote empowering “inside-out” missions |

Chapter 8 – The way forward

This chapter draws together the insights from the previous chapters, and applies
them to the model developed in chapter 5, in order to give direction to efforts at missions with the destitute.

9 Sources

In terms of specific sources, I intend to make use of the following:-

1. Literature study: I approach this study in a multi-disciplinary manner, drawing insights from theology, psychology, social welfare, political sciences, developmental studies, sociology, and related fields.
2. Case studies (including counselling and interviews, as well as insights gained from a daily reflection group with social workers and pastoral therapists working among the destitute)
3. Internet sources.

10 Gender use

I am sensitive to gender issues; therefore I have attempted to steer clear of any specific gender in writing. Where I might have failed to do so, it is unintentional.

11 Referring to God

It is recognized that references to God should take into account the importance of inclusive language that recognizes God as having masculine, feminine and “ungendered” characteristics. In this thesis, God is mostly referred to as “he”, in correlation to the dominant tradition known to the author, and in which the author is situated. However, I am sensitive to the importance of inclusive language, as well as cognizant of the debate and developments in this area of theology. Therefore, even where God is referred to in masculine terminology, it must be understood that inclusive language is implied.
Chapter 2 – Why Are People Destitute?

In the following chapter, I advance the hypothesis that people become destitute because of various reasons that interact dynamically. The deduction follows that a variety of possible reasons, causes or problems lead to destitution. The theory is that some causes and problems are external, meaning they originate from outside the person, an occurrence which is mostly outside the control of her or him. Simultaneously, there are causes that are internal, functioning within a person to motivate certain choices above others. These “external” problems can usually also be classified as “social” or “structural” in nature, while “internal” problems are also termed “individualistic”. These issues are dynamically interactive, and cannot really be separated. This chapter does not attempt to exhaustively explore the possible problems, causes, issues and factors contributing to destitution, but is intended merely to provide an overview of the immensity of the problem of destitution. It also serves as a starting point which following chapters will build upon.

1 Introduction

It seems reasonable to assume that few individuals aspire to be destitute – yet many still are! The reasons are often unclear, and often poorly articulated. One popular perspective has been to identify major social problems, such as unemployment. Another perspective focuses on the personalities of destitute people, which are presumed to be defective. Morse (Morse in Robertson & Greenblatt, 1992:4) reacts to this by stating: “Blaming individuals is a narrow, grossly distorted oversimplification of the factors that lead to homelessness destitution”. On the other hand, explanations identifying only social forces are also inadequate. Destitution remains a complex, multi-determined phenomenon.

In literature, as well as in the common view, destitution is seen as primarily a problem of poverty. Several writers have stated that at least one originating source of destitution can be found in the existence of poverty (Morse, 1982; Baxter, E & Hopper, K, 1981; Wood, S.M. 1992). Yet, even though the destitute can be perceived as the poorest of the poor, destitution is also an issue having to do with personal choice and characteristics, as well as a social, cultural, organizational and institutional problem. In
dealing with the reasons for destitution, all the different issues, and the way they
dynamically interact, will need to be taken into consideration.

2 Exploring theories about the causes for destitution
Meyers (1999:82) states that “our understanding of the causes of poverty tends to be in
the eye of the beholder. If care is not taken to understand our unwitting biases, our
understanding of the causes of poverty tends to be an outworking of our place in the
social system, our education, our culture and our personality”.

When talking about destitution, and the reasons people are destitute, the real
question should be: “Why do people become so poor that they lack the basic means of
human existence?” There are many theories as to why people become destitute; together
these different viewpoints should offer a sound understanding of the factors involved in
causing destitution. It would also seem that while some factors are more directly involved
in causing destitution, others appear to function indirectly by contributing to destitution,
while perhaps not directly causing it.

In exploring causes for destitution, a number of theories, models and viewpoints are
considered. These must be seen as complementary, each adding something to the other.
They also often overlap. From these different theories, a new theory emerges.

2.1 Morse: Destitution as the result of different categories of
causal factors
Morse (in Robertson & Greenblatt, 1992:3-14) divides the factors causing destitution into
six categories, namely cultural, institutional, community, organizational, group and
individual factors.

According to Morse (1992:4), cultural factors would include racism, racial
discrimination and racial prejudices. As will be evident later on in this chapter, poverty
and its associated problems are much more prevalent among the black population of
South Africa than the white, even today, 13 years after the demise of apartheid. Cultural
factors also include prejudices against the poor because they are judged by the common
public as being lazy, or weaklings with alcohol problems. Apathy and the lack of involvement that characterizes the dominant social position regarding destitute people also plays a role: usually resulting in fewer social resources and services being devoted to addressing destitution.

Institutional factors include macro-economic issues that promote and cause poverty, such as a lack of affordable housing, of appropriate social assistance, of mental health care and policies, of adequate substance abuse treatment, of integrated care for previous convicts (who become destitute upon leaving justice systems and prisons), as well as of coordination and cooperation between institutional systems (Morse 1992:6-9).

Community factors concern the breakdown in communities, where communities become poor and marginalized, leading to destitution. Such factors also refer to urban redevelopment policies that adversely affect certain communities and cause them to become poorer.

Organizational factors have to do with the fact that destitute people often struggle to gain “entry” into organizations that could help them, because of issues such as needing a permanent address to qualify for services such as grants, or organizations that will not accept people with a history of mental illness or violence. Amongst organizational factors one comes across service delivery problems that contribute to destitution, because services are often not available, or accessible, or appropriate. Service withdrawal also contributes to destitution: where services are withdrawn from poor communities because people cannot pay, or grants for the delivery of those services are withdrawn.

Family factors are concerned with a person’s dysfunctional early family experiences, or disconnected current family experiences that subsequently cause destitution by isolating people.

Morse (1992:13) defines individual factors as individual characteristics that tend to contribute to destitution, such as alcoholism and drug abuse, poor physical health,
mental disorders and defective personalities. These factors contribute to destitution because (1) they tend to limit a person’s coping abilities; (2) diminish social supports and resources (owing to overuse or abuse of, for instance, family help); and (3) consequently make the person more dependent on social institutions and organizations.

Individual factors also include personal choice. According to Morse (1992:13) personal choice as a causal factor in destitution is often misunderstood. Some observers deny it completely; others inappropriately consider it the chief cause of destitution.

Some people do choose shelters and the streets over mental hospitals, boarding homes, SRO’s and intolerable family situations. Similarly, some people choose to sleep on the streets rather than in shelters because of dehumanizing conditions in the shelters. The choice to become destitute, however, is not an affirmation of an ideal lifestyle, but a means to obtain a sense of self control and dignity when faced with a lack of meaningful, safe and viable living alternatives (Morse, 1992:13).

Another aspect of individual factors (according to Morse, 1992:13) is that of adaptation. At some point after a person becomes destitute, a process of adaptation to destitution begins. Gradually the person adjusts to the status of destitution. Much of this adaptive process revolves around daily activities. As Hopper et al. (1982:15) note, the destitute life is a difficult, demanding exercise where survival is an uncertain, demeaning and full-time occupation. “Daily activities are geared towards meeting important basic needs for food, income and shelter while also attempting to assure one’s personal safety from physical harm and harassment.” In addition, Morse (1992:13) states, the absence of showers and clean, fresh clothing quickly diminishes one’s ability to obtain a decent job. The individual may also learn behaviours that perpetuate destitution. “The tactics of survival learned on the streets (be it a consciously cultivated foul odour, or techniques of vigilance and concealment) serve to further isolate and alienate. What is adaptive behaviour on the streets may be ill suited to resuming a settled mode of living” (Morse, 1992:13).

Kraybill (2003:8) adds to individual factors what he terms personal vulnerabilities, and personal feelings that promote destitution. The former vulnerabilities
include (1) physical health problems, (2) mental disorders, (3) substance use disorders, (4) trauma and abuse/domestic violence.

Personal feelings would include (1) anxiety, fear, (2) shame, guilt, (3) frustration, anger, (4) depression, psychosis, (5) low energy and motivation, (5) lack of self-efficacy, (6) lack of meaning, identity, belonging and (7) hopelessness. These feelings promote destitution by placing people in a state of mind where they cannot, or do not want to, fight life and its problems any longer.

2.2 Lewis: Destitution as the result of “The culture of poverty”

This term is associated with Oscar Lewis, a well known anthropologist, and was first used by him in his book *Five Families: Mexican Case Studies in the Culture of Poverty* (1959). The basic thesis of the “culture of poverty” explanation holds that some people are poor because their culture or way of life is faulty. This “culture” is then passed down from generation to generation along family lines (Landon, 2006:11).

According to this theoretical perspective, people are poor because of certain personal or cultural defects. For example, blacks and the poor in general have been characterized as participating in a "culture of poverty" (Banfield 1970; Glazer and Moynihan 1970; Lewis 1959). People are poor because this is all that they know how to be. In his portrayal of the poor, Lewis (1959:2) writes that:

Poverty becomes a dynamic factor which affects participation in the national culture and creates a subculture of its own. One can speak of the culture of the poor; for it has its own modalities and distinctive social and psychological consequences for its members. It seems ... that the culture of poverty cuts across regional, rural-urban, and even national boundaries, the remarkable similarities in family structure, the nature of kinship ties, the quality of husband-wife and parent-child relations, time orientations, spending patterns, value systems, and the sense of community found in lower-class settlements in London, Puerto Rico, Mexico City slums and Mexican villages, and among lower-class (blacks) in the United States.

In another work, Lewis (1966:19) contends that the "culture of poverty" is a "subculture of Western society with its own structure and rationale, a way of life handed on from generation to generation along family lines ... a culture in the traditional and
anthropological sense that it provides human beings a design for living”. Implicit in this statement is the view that a person in this subculture learns a coherent set of values, attitudes and beliefs (culture) which hinder participation in the larger society. Lewis feels that conditions of poverty generate a set of values and behaviour patterns that are unique to the poor and inclusive of such characteristics as fatalistic attitudes towards life, lack of initiative and deferred gratification, strong feelings of alienation, helplessness, dependence, and inferiority.

Lewis's theory is controversial and has been widely debated and adequately critiqued, most notably by Valentine (1968, 1971) and Leacock (1971). Critics claim that the behaviour associated with the poor is the result of poverty, not its cause. They maintain that the “culture of poverty” explanation is an example of "blaming the victims" for their condition (Valentine, 1968).

According to Valentine (1971:215), one of the serious shortcomings of this theory is its limited application. The culture-of-poverty theory also assumes an overly uniform view of culture and values in societies (Gang, 1972: 279). The poor may differ in some respects, but so do many groups in their society. Contrary to this theoretical view, the poor do not constitute a homogenous group because most of the poor are not poor for life nor stem from generations of poor ancestors (Easterlin, 1987: 199).

Valentine (1971:204-211), in criticizing Lewis, “reformed” the culture of poverty theory into five propositions: (1) lack of participation in the larger society by the poor; (2) different values; (3) no local organization among the poor beyond the family, unstable family life and weak identity; (4) weak character and (5) weak development of a worldview. His critique centres on the claim that these propositions are more the result of poverty than the cause of poverty.

In spite of the criticisms above, the said theory has been widely accepted, at least to some degree. As Landon (2006:19) puts it, “at least some of the conclusions reached in
the culture of poverty theory about some poor people seem evident to even the casual observer of poverty”.

2.3 Destitution as the result of a dysfunctional “economic ethos”

“Ethos” is defined here as society’s way of thinking, a general understanding of what is true and good in a society.

Harrison (1985:20-56) develops “economic ethos” as a theory where certain social attitudes would lead to economic development, and the lack of those attitudes would, then, obviously lead to a society where poverty develops easily. These attitudes are: (1) an expectation of fair play; (2) an educational system that provides basic skills, promotes problem solving and nurtures inquisitiveness, creativity and critical thinking; (3) a good health care system; (4) an environment that encourages experimentation and criticism; (5) freedom to match skills, desires and jobs; (6) rewards for merits and achievements; (7) political and social stability and continuity.

Nida (1974:9) discusses economic ethos in a much more individualized way, and almost blames personal inadequacies among poor people for economic failure that would perpetuate destitution and poverty. He first writes about poverty in Latin America, and subsequently states: “…traits like a sense of inferiority, opposition to manual labour, fatalism and irresponsibility (as exhibited by many poor people) describe the type of society that will not succeed economically”.

Another aspect of a dysfunctional economic ethos would be that of corruption, which would obviously undermine a healthy economic ethos. World Bank research has shown that corruption interferes with education, health care, co-operative markets and delivery systems (Narayan et al., 2002:22-41).

Various theologians have also blamed institutional factors such as a dysfunctional economic ethos for causing and contributing to destitution. This is termed “structural
sin”. Many liberation theologians (Gutierrez, 1986:256; Pixley & Boff, 1986:21; Sobrino, 1982:155) are passionate in their repeated linking of poverty with injustice and varieties of oppression. The basic premise is that the poverty of the poor is caused by oppression by rich countries, or structures (socio-political systems) of injustice.

2.4 Destitution as the result of personal irresponsibility

In this explanation, it is the individual’s actions that cause or do not cause poverty, not the whole society’s worldview and values (Landon, 2006:29). Its basic argument is that people are poor because they are irresponsible: make mistakes of judgment, get themselves in jams, are injured through carelessness, etc. The critical point is that these people “knew better”, yet took irresponsible chances, or even chose to do wrong. This explanation implies that there is something pathological about the individual, his/her thinking and behaviour, which could be repaired if he/she would simply imitate good folks (Landon, 2006:30).

This concept links closely to that of “individual factors” as part of Morse’s theory explained above. Even if it is true (which is debatable: because people are often pushed into irresponsible behaviour simply because they are trying to survive), it is still too narrow a viewpoint to explain the whole problem of poverty and destitution.

2.5 Christian: Destitution as the result of a complex framework of disempowerment

Christian (1994:334) states that poor people are embedded in a complex framework of interacting systems. For Christian these systems include a (1) personal system (including psychology); (2) a social system; (3) a spiritual-religious system which is both personal and social; (4) a cultural system that includes a worldview; and (5) a biophysical system.

He defines the way in which every one of these systems contributes towards entrapping people in poverty.
The social system, including socio-economic-political realities, reinforces the powerlessness of the poor by means of exclusion and exploitation. This is driven by an undisclosed and often unrecognized attitude amongst non-poor people who see themselves as superior and therefore meant to rule. They consequently start to play god in the lives of the poor, using religious systems, the law, media, government policies, and people occupying positions of power (Christian 1994:178).

The spiritual-religious system refers to the impact of the fall and sin on individual human beings, as well as the additional impact of deception by principalities and powers. The powerlessness of the poor is reinforced by the fear and deceit created by “the god of this world that has blinded the minds of unbelievers” (2 Cor. 4:4) and the “trap of the devil who has taken them captive to do his will” (2 Tim. 2:26). (Christian 1994:252) In this way Christian affirms that it is not simply human beings, and the systems in which they live, which create and sustain poverty. There is a cosmic adversary that works against life.

For Christian (1994:199) cultural system encompasses inadequacies in worldview. This signifies a culture that conditions people to accept certain convictions, such as those that the “blacks must serve and whites must rule” culture which dominated the apartheid years.

Biophysical system (body-mind-spirit) includes the body, mind and spirit that are weakened by hunger, illness and lack of education, thereby disabling people from lifting themselves out of the poverty trap. (Christian 1994:200)

The personal system, as Christian (1994:207) perceives it, refers to the “marred” identity of the poor. Impoverished people suffer from marred identities in two ways: (1) they see themselves as “damaged goods”, a perception affirmed by the powerful who treat the poor as people with nothing to offer, while (2) a lifetime of suffering, deception and exclusion is internalized by the poor in a way that results in their no longer knowing who they are or why they were created, without value and without gifts.
2.6 Chambers: Destitution as the result of the “poverty trap”

Chambers (1983:103-139) describes the poor as “living in a cluster of disadvantages”, where people are poor, physically weak, isolated, vulnerable and powerless, and where these dimensions of poverty interact in a system called the poverty trap. He specifically names the following dimensions of poverty:

1. Material poverty (lack of physical goods)
2. Physical weakness (lack of health)
3. Isolation (lack of access and information)
4. Vulnerability (Few buffers against emergencies)
5. Powerlessness (poor people possess very little influence to change their world)
6. From the work of Meyers (1999:85), spiritual poverty can be added.

2.7 Theories about destitution as the result of marginalization

One of the greatest challenges for destitute people is the extent to which they are disaffiliated or marginalized from society. There are different perspectives as to “why” disaffiliation and destitution with concurrent marginalization occur in today’s society. In the 1980s, two polarized perspectives were offered. One, expounded most strongly by Baum and Burnes (1993), is that people become disaffiliated of their own doing. Personal problems such as mental illness, substance abuse, and legal issues challenge a destitute person’s ability to attach, or remain attached, to the rest of society.

Others argue that structural changes in the economy and housing market have created more poor people and less low-income housing, making destitution inevitable for some proportion of the population. According to this second view, society abandoned the destitute (Koegel, Burnam, & Bauhmohl, 1996; Wright et al., 1998).

The above viewpoints illustrate the two sides of the coin in the engagement of destitution, namely, on the one hand, “inside/ internal” factors that contribute to destitution, and, on the other, “outside/ external” factors that do so: addressed under the following headings as “Inside-Out” and “Outside-In” missions.
A third view, and probably the one that is most broadly accepted, is that “times had grown unforgiving” (Koegel et al., 1996: 30). Given the complexities in the overall structural context, people with personal limitations experience a difficult time competing for the limited affordable housing and better-paying jobs available. This is especially true for people suffering from chronic disabilities, such as mental illness and HIV/AIDS, and those experiencing problems of substance abuse. Moreover, these risk factors are often bundled together, leading to a further marginalization of this segment of the poverty population (Koegel et al., 1996; Wright et al., 1998).

Kraybill (2003:8) refers to “structural barriers” that promote marginalization and destitution. These include (1) lack of adequate income support/a livable wage; (2) lack of appropriate, affordable housing; (3) lack of access to health/mental health/substance abuse care; and (4) inadequate social supports.

In this respect Friedman (1992:67) suggests that poverty (destitution) is the lack of access to eight bases of social power:
1. Financial resources
2. Social networks
3. Appropriate information
4. Surplus time over subsistence requirements
5. Instruments of work and livelihood
6. Social organization
7. Knowledge and skills
8. Defensible life space.

After discussion with Stefan de Beer (IUM, 2005) concerning this model, two more bases of social power can be added:
9. Cultural values (meaning access to cultural rituals, symbols and even values that makes life worthwhile)
10. Spirituality (access to the means of gaining a higher frame of reference and meaning, or even comfort). Meyers (1999:85) also suggests that Friedman ignores the spiritual causes of poverty.

Friedman (1992:33) states that, when people do not enjoy access to these “bases of power”, they will be in absolute poverty. Empowerment would facilitate the increased access of people to these bases, i.e. access to housing, to economic opportunity etc. Alternative development, for Friedman, “is a process that seeks the empowerment of the households and their individual members through their involvement in socially and politically relevant actions”. It is concerned with the creation of a socially just community, in which all people enjoy access to the resources of God. Friedman believes that self-reliance is not enough, since poor people do not control the resources needed to improve their situation.

3 Making sense of the different viewpoints and theories about the causes of destitution

Much can be learned from the different viewpoints as to the causes of destitution, as long as these viewpoints are seen as complementary.

3.1 Looking deeper than just at immediate needs for the causes of destitution

Meyers (1999:82) states that our understanding of the causes of poverty and destitution also depends on where we start looking at poverty, and more important, where we stop looking. Often we focus on the immediate need as the cause of the problem, and forget about other, underlying, causes.

For example, if we are only concerned with needs, we will only see lack of water. Without further thought, lack of water is the cause of poverty, and providing water is the answer. However, behind needs are issues, such as ownership of the water. If this is the cause of the lack of water, then the response is to work on ownership or access. Yet behind issues there are structures, such as economic or even racial privileges, that influences who gets access to the water. Behind structures are groups who inhabit and enforce the structures by insisting that “it is our water and our right to control its use”. Behind these groups are the ideologies
and values that inform the group and shape the social structure, the unspoken assumption that “we are to be served and they are subhuman and aren’t supposed to drink where we drink”. This is worldview (82).

While this theory clearly illustrates the fact that underlying causes of destitution do exist, helpers should always guard against ignoring the immediate needs of people.

3.2 The causes of destitution as a two sided coin

As Sommer (2001:19) states, historically, attempts to explain why people were destitute focused on economic marginality and individual disability, and the remedies provided reflected an ideology which held that, especially among the able-bodied, destitution was a lifestyle choice. Though few today would deny that the destitute are disproportionately affected by personal disabilities, poverty, and unemployment, the exact relationship between destitute characteristics and the causes of destitution is still widely disputed.
Today these theories generally fall into one of two categories: (1) individual deficits or personal disabilities, or (2) societal or structural conditions. The former include factors such as mental illness, behavioural problems including substance abuse and addiction, and family estrangement: factors that affect one on a deeply personal or intimate level. Structural factors incorporate those larger economic or societal conditions such as the changing job market; increasing poverty, a widening income gap; and changes in the housing market (Sommer, 2001:19-20). Wright et al. (1998:25) describes this latter category as relating to the “way our society’s resources are organized and distributed”.

Seltser & Miller (1993:112-114) also argue that there are two approaches in this regard:

We suggest that there are two different approaches to understanding the causes of destitution. On the one hand, it is possible to assume an individualistic perspective that examines factors within a destitute person’s life history and decision-making that predisposes them to becoming destitute. From an individualistic vantage point one can usually identify one or two precipitating factors that result in a family becoming destitute, such as the breakup of a relationship or poor financial judgment. Individualistic explanations are often more psychological in probing family history experiences, such as childhood sexual abuse, that seem to correlate with destitution.

In contrast, structural explanations tend to explain destitution in terms of high unemployment rates, lack of available low-income housing, a low minimum wage, and welfare payments that are intended to punish their recipients. Structural explanations hold society accountable for destitution and emphasize changes in government policy. In contrast, individualistic theories of destitution commonly take one of two approaches: either they focus on rehabilitating destitute people through psychological counseling and intervention, or else they draw the conclusion that destitute people simply must learn to be more responsible and take charge of their own lives.

On the one hand certain advocates prefer structural theories (referring to issues such as social injustice, economic structures and other societal structures). (Wright, Rubin, and Devine, 1998; O’Flaherty, 1996; Koegel, Burnam and Baumohl, 1996; Jencks, 1994; Baum and Burnes, 1993; and Burt, 1992.) These advocates suggest greater government intervention in the lives of poor people.
On the other hand, in contrast, some helpers tend to place the emphasis on individual accountability (Wright and Weber, 1987; Koegel and Burnham, 1987).

Hence Seltser and Miller (1993:4) assert that in order to understand what destitute people are experiencing, we must seek to fathom not just the facts and patterns and events of their lives (their objective reality: or external factors), but the ways in which they feel and respond to these events as human beings (their subjective reality: or internal factors).

They also state that a cross-cutting variable occurs whether one conceives of intervention as being fundamentally a “psychological” or “sociological” task. Psychologists and psychiatrists, for example, have tended to emphasize individual and group therapy as a way of solving past problems (such as sexual abuse), whereas those with a more sociological orientation often stress the importance of creating social support networks that connect an individual to social institutions (including family networks) within the community.

It should be clear that the causes of destitution are like a two-sided coin, where we have personal, individualistic and internal factors on the one side and structural societal factors, usually external to the individual, on the other. The interaction between the two sides of this coin should be handled with care, so that neither the individual responsibility of destitute people to take charge of their own lives, nor the responsibility of society, is neglected.

### 3.3 A model of possible causes for destitution

Differentiating between internal and external “causes” (or aspects) of destitution is a challenge, because sometimes it is difficult to determine whether an issue is internal or external: the criterion then used is “where does it mostly function?” It is also difficult to determine what comes first, because most often one cause leads to another, and so on, in a spiral, or chain reaction. Not knowing what came first necessitates a holistic approach that addresses the whole system of issues associated with destitution.
Both those issues that function internally from the “inside-out” (where factors operating inside an individual impact on her or his outside situation), as well as those issues that function externally, from the “outside-in” (where factors functioning from outside the person affect that person on the inside), work together dynamically in a system. In order to really help the destitute, we must direct our efforts at the system promoting the problem of destitution, meaning we must follow a holistic systems approach.

We can illustrate this “system” as follows:

The “Inside – Outside” system approach developed here postulates a dynamic interaction between the different causes and factors contributing to destitution. Using the different theories explored already in this chapter, causes are pinpointed and categorized. The following table should make this clearer:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inside-out</th>
<th>Outside</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Physical Problems</strong></td>
<td><strong>Cultural Problems</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Substance abuse and addictions</td>
<td>• Racism, racial discrimination and racial prejudices (Apartheid)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Poor physical health and illness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The “Inside – Outside” system approach developed here postulates a dynamic interaction between the different causes and factors contributing to destitution. Using the different theories explored already in this chapter, causes are pinpointed and categorized. The following table should make this clearer:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emotional Problems</th>
<th>Institutional Problems</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mental illness</td>
<td>Public apathy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical handicaps</td>
<td>Gender inequality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative childhood experiences or dysfunctional family</td>
<td>Failure of the State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>experiences</td>
<td>Lack of appropriate social services and assistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abuse and domestic violence</td>
<td>Difficulty accessing systems of help</td>
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<td>Trauma</td>
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<td>Overwhelming negative feelings</td>
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<td>Lack of belonging</td>
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<td>Continued rejection by people and systems (leading to</td>
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<td>distrust and self-ostracization)</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal Development Problems</th>
<th>Problems of Global Society</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of education, knowledge and skills</td>
<td>Operating worldwide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of access to knowledge and information</td>
<td>• Poverty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of meaning and identity</td>
<td>• Dysfunctional economic ethos leading to famine and hunger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of access to culture (including cultural values)</td>
<td>• Disasters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wrong worldview</td>
<td>• Urbanization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generational carry-over of “culture of poverty” tendencies</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Adaptation to life on the streets</td>
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</tbody>
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<tr>
<th>Spiritual Problems</th>
<th>Micro-Societal Problems</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual poverty (dysfunctional and broken relationships with God, each other, the community</td>
<td>Operating locally, in SA context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Poverty in SA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Lack of affordable housing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Dynamic interaction
and creation)

- Personal sin and spiritual blindness
- Lack of employment
- Urban redevelopment policies and displacement
- Failure of the State
- Violence and crime
- Fertility rates, mortality rates
- Illegal immigration

4 Exploring the “inside-out” issues

“A family is none the less poor for having arrived at that state of its own accord. Similarly, the fact that an individual could with modest and reasonable effort escape from poverty has nothing to do with whether he[sic] is currently poor.”

The statement is ambiguous, yet demonstrates clearly the ambivalent fact that on the one hand we face the physical reality of people who are poor, and become destitute (whether because of internal factors such as their own wrong choices, mistakes etc., or owing to external factors outside of their control), while on the other hand we simultaneously experience the reality of people who stay poor, even though they can escape their situation, maybe because they are unwilling to make choices towards positive change, or because they have not been empowered enough (with knowledge, life skills etc.) to change and escape the poverty trap, or because of personal irresponsibility.

A closer look at the variety of causal factors involved should promote a better understanding of the often ambiguous realities faced by helpers engaging the destitute.

4.1 Physical problems

This refers to health and health-related issues experienced by destitute people.

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4.1.1 Substance abuse and addictions
According to studies by Oakely & Dennis (1996:179-186) and Wright & Rubin (1997:45), untreated addictive disorders do contribute to destitution. These authors state that, for those with below-living wage incomes and just one step away from destitution, the onset or exacerbation of an addictive disorder may provide just the catalyst to plunge them into residential instability. For people who are addicted and destitute, the health condition may be prolonged by the very life circumstances in which they find themselves. Alcohol and drug use may help meet immediate needs by providing respite from otherwise stressful and sometimes violent conditions, and thus distract from activities oriented toward stability. For people with untreated co-occurring serious mental illness, the use of alcohol and other drugs may serve as a form of self-medication. For still others, a sense of hopelessness about the future allows them to discount their addictive disorder. These explanations for addiction's sway over some destitute people should not obscure another reality: that many destitute persons with addictive disorders desire to overcome their disease, but that the combination of the destitute condition itself and a service system ill-equipped to respond to these circumstances essentially bars their access to treatment services and recovery supports.

4.1.2 Poor physical health and illness
The health status of destitute people has been a long-standing concern. The physical conditions and daily stress under which they live render the homeless extremely vulnerable to both acute and chronic health problems (Wright et al., 1998:23). This in turn keeps them destitute, or promotes a further slide into destitution.

    Poverty creates ill-health because it forces people to live in environments that make them sick, without decent shelter, clean water or adequate sanitation. Poverty creates hunger, which in turn leaves people vulnerable to disease. Poverty denies people access to reliable health services and affordable medicines, and causes children to miss out on routine vaccinations. Poverty creates illiteracy, leaving people poorly informed about health risks and forced into dangerous jobs that harm their health (1998:23-26).
AIDS as a major illness should be mentioned separately. According to the Joint United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and the World Health Organization (WHO), AIDS is now second only to the Black Death\(^5\) as the largest epidemic in history. AIDS kills about 2.9 million people a year, or about one person every 11 seconds. This death toll surprisingly includes many children, who are often infected with the HIV virus during pregnancy or through breast-feeding. The toll is worst in Africa, where millions of parents have died, leaving children as orphans. Often teachers have died as well, leaving schools empty. Doctors and nurses have died, leaving hospitals and medical clinics with nothing. Farmers have died, leaving crops in the fields. Entire villages have been devastated. Yet AIDS is a preventable and increasingly treatable disease. The huge majority of deaths can be stopped. Through education, the use of condoms, and proper medicine, AIDS has been brought under control in the developed countries. The same could be true in Africa and other poor areas of the world.

Added to this is the huge number of AIDS orphans in the country, a number that is growing daily. They grow up in abject poverty. People with HIV/AIDS are also stigmatized: leading to isolation and exclusion from society, and thereby further contributing to destitution. “Although the government conducted campaigns to reduce or eliminate discrimination against persons with HIV/AIDS, the social stigma associated with HIV/AIDS remained a general problem” (Human Rights Report 2006:17).

There are also numerous barriers to health treatment and recovery opportunities for destitute people. Barret, C.B., Carter M.R. & Little, P.D. (2006:169-170) explains the challenges of health care in South Africa in the following words:

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\(^5\) The **Black Death**, or the **Black Plague**, was one of the deadliest pandemics in human history, widely thought to have been caused by a bacterium named *Yersinia pestis* (Bubonic plague),\(^1\) but recently sometimes attributed to other diseases. It most likely began in Central Asia and spread to Europe during the 1340s. The total number of deaths worldwide from the pandemic is estimated at 75 million people; approximately 25-50 million occurred in Europe. The Black Death is estimated to have killed 30% to 60% of Europe's population. It may have reduced the world's population from an estimated 450 million to between 350 and 375 million in 1400.
The most pressing challenges include: low pay for health workers; despair about AIDS and the government's reluctance to provide clear treatment guidelines; lack of basic infrastructure such as roads and telephones in remote rural areas, which makes TB testing difficult (South Africa has the highest TB rates in the world, fanned by HIV); and the growth of multi-drug resistant TB, which has already killed health workers. To add to this, there is a high incidence of poverty-related illnesses, including TB, malaria, cholera, hepatitis B, and measles. Malnutrition is rife – stunting affects up to 27% of children. About 2.5 million people are malnourished and a further 14 million at risk. There is concern that the massive poverty-alleviation program, together with improvements in water supply, sanitation, nutrition, and vaccination, could be submerged by the tidal wave of HIV. Already AIDS patients fill 40% of beds in some hospitals.

Other barriers to treatment include lack of transport, lack of documentation, lack of supportive services, and abstinence-only programming (Cousineau et al, 1995: 112).

### 4.1.3 Mental illness

This has been a chicken-and-egg question for decades: Does the misery of poverty breed mental illness, or does the burden of mental illness cast people down into poverty? The two clearly tend to accompany each other, but which causes which? Hudson (2003) conducted a study between 1994-2000, and found that unemployment, poverty and housing unaffordability were correlated with a risk of mental illness. Draine et al. (2002:565-572) strongly assert that poverty and its associated problems tend to bring about mental illness, rather than the other way around. They also make a case for the fact that the resulting mental illness “disables” a person from becoming non-destitute again.

It should be clear that mental illness could be either a cause or result of destitution, or both at the same time. Suffice it to say that mental illness can be considered a cause of destitution.

### 4.1.4 Physical handicaps

For Odera (1998:1) although a physical disability should not automatically lead to marginalisation, it is a fact that those who are disabled in one way or another are often led to engage in undesirable activities such as begging in the streets. The Country Report on Human Rights Practices for South Africa in 2006 (2006:13-14) found that, even though our laws prohibit discrimination on the basis of disability, government and private sector
discrimination in employment existed. The law mandates access to buildings for persons with disabilities, but such regulations are rarely enforced, and public awareness of them remained minimal.

This marginalization directly impacts on destitution, by excluding handicapped people from jobs or normal participation in society, thereby sliding them into poverty and possible destitution.

4.2 Emotional problems

4.2.1 Negative childhood experiences or dysfunctional family experiences
Quite a number of studies have documented strong associations of negative childhood experiences and dysfunctional family experiences with destitution (Bassuk et al., 1997; Caton et al., 1994; Herman et al., 1997; Koegel, Melamid and Burnam, 1995; Mangine, Royse and Wiehe, 1990; Susser, Struening and Conover, 1987; Susser et al., 1991; Weitzman, Knickman and Shinn, 1992; Wood et al., 1990). The most common childhood experiences associated with a higher risk of experiencing destitution follow: histories of foster care and other out-of-home placement, physical and sexual abuse (which often precede out-of-home placement), parental substance abuse, and residential instability and destitution together with one's family as a child. These experiences are much more common among people who have been destitute as adults than among people who have not.

4.2.2 Abuse and domestic violence
A number of studies have found that violence in the lives of destitute people comprises a major factor for understanding critical pathways from childhood and adulthood into destitution (Bassuk, Melnick and Browne, 1998; Kipke et al., 1997; Link et al., 1995; North, Smith and Spitznagel, 1994; Toro et al., 1995). Such violence experienced during childhood and adolescence often continues once individuals become destitute as a result of their lack of protection and personal security. These experiences lead to both acute and chronic health conditions (Gelberg, Linn and Mayer-Oakes, 1990: 1221) and potentially
affect trust-building and subsequent adherence to preventive and ongoing interventions (Goodman et al., 1997: 686).

It would seem that mostly women and children suffer because of domestic violence. Many women in SA suffer from abusive relationships, often resulting in these people fleeing into shelters or to the street, thus becoming destitute. Battered women who live in poverty are often forced to choose between abusive relationships and destitution. It is estimated that one in every four women in SA suffers from abuse in their relationships (SACLA Conference 2003).

According to findings by the Institute for Women’s Policy Research (1997:57), a sizable portion of the welfare population experiences domestic violence at any given time; thus, without significant support, many welfare recipients are at risk of destitution or continued violence. In the absence of cash assistance, women who experience domestic violence may be at increased risk of destitution or compelled to live with a former or current abuser in order to prevent destitution.

The actual statistics highlight the severity of this problem in a South African context. One study surveying 1 306 women in three South African provinces found that 27% of women in the Eastern Cape, 28% of women in Mpumalanga and 19% of women in the Northern Province had been physically abused in their lifetimes by a current or ex-partner. The same study investigated the prevalence of emotional and financial abuse experienced by women in the year prior to the study and found that 51% of women in the Eastern Cape, 50% in Mpumalanga and 40% in Northern Province were subjected to these types of abuse (Jewkes et al., 1999).

Another study, undertaken with a sample of 168 women drawn from 15 rural communities in the Southern Cape, estimated that on average 80% of rural women are victims of domestic violence. Interviews conducted with 1 394 men working for three Cape Town municipalities found that approximately 44% of the men were willing to admit that they abused their female partners (Abrahams et al., 1999). National figures for
intimate femicide (the killing by men of their intimate female partners) suggest that this most lethal form of domestic violence is prevalent in South Africa. In 1999 8.8 per 100 000 of the female population aged 14 years and older died at the hands of their partners – the highest rate ever reported in research anywhere in the world (Mathews et al., 2004). At present the true extent of sexual violence in South Africa is unknown. StatsSA established that one in two rape survivors reported being raped to the police (Hirschowitz, Worku and Orkin, 2000), while the Medical Research Council (MRC) found that one in nine women reported being raped (Jewkes and Abrahams, 2002). Both studies clearly find rape to be under-reported although their findings differ as to the extent of such under-reporting. On the basis of the above studies it can be extrapolated that the 52 733 rapes reported by the SAPS in their data released for 2003/04 are more accurately calculated as falling somewhere between the region of 104 000 and 470 000 actual rapes having taken place.

**4.2.3 Trauma**

According to Jaffe, Segal & Dumke (2005:2) recent research has revealed that emotional trauma can result from such common occurrences as a motor vehicle accident, the breakup of a significant relationship, a humiliating or deeply disappointing experience, the discovery of a life-threatening illness or disabling condition, or other similar situations. In the lives of the destitute trauma is often brought about by abuse, life on the streets, family situations; even abuse by the systems of the day, accidents, crime, divorce and the death of people close to a person.

Trauma exhibits three defining characteristics, namely (1) it was unexpected; (2) the person was unprepared; (3) there was nothing the person could do to prevent it from happening. These “unexpected” shocks can seriously “overload” an individual’s ability to cope, followed by a range of possible effects, some more long term than others.

Traumatizing events can take a serious emotional toll on those involved, even if the event did not cause physical damage. “Even when unrecognized, emotional trauma

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can create lasting difficulties and effects in an individual's life” (Jaffe, Segal & Dumke, 2005:3). These can range from substance abuse, compulsive behaviour patterns, self-destructive and impulsive behaviour, uncontrollable reactive thoughts, an inability to make healthy professional or lifestyle choices, dissociative symptoms ("splitting off" parts of the self), feelings of ineffectiveness, shame, despair, hopelessness, feeling permanently damaged, losing previously sustained beliefs (2005:4). Trauma can also include the inability to maintain close relationships or choose appropriate friends and mates, hostility, arguments with family members, employers or co-workers, social withdrawal and feelings of constantly being threatened (2005:5). All of these effects can contribute to people becoming destitute.

Emotional trauma, especially continued and/ or consecutive emotional trauma, may seriously affect a person’s coping abilities or mental state, thereby contributing to a slide into poverty, or even destitution itself. These kinds of trauma can precipitate poor decision-making, a lack of coping ability and a loss of meaning: all contributing to destitution.

4.2.4 Overwhelming negative feelings

These are closely linked to trauma and its associated feelings. Overwhelming negative feelings are also often brought about by trauma, including the trauma of being destitute or being “down and out”. According to Kraybill (2003:8) these feelings could include (1) anxiety, fear, (2) shame, guilt, (3) frustration, anger, (4) depression, psychosis, (5) low energy and motivation, (5) lack of self-efficacy, (6) lack of meaning, identity, belonging, and (7) hopelessness [as was already mentioned]. These feelings promote destitution by putting people in a state of mind where they cannot, or do not want to, fight life and its problems anymore. These feelings and self-perceptions “disable” destitute people from viewing themselves as capable of solving their own problems, often leading to greater despondency and despair.

Wink (1992:101) adds that “Poor people feel nonexistent, valueless, humiliated”. These feelings often lead to mistrust; therefore Kraybill (2003:16) focuses on the building of trust as an important issue when doing missions with the destitute.
It would also seem that these overwhelming feelings are often precipitators towards mental illness, or to a slide into poverty and eventual destitution.

4.2.5 Lack of belonging/connectedness
Referring back to Baum and Burnes (1993), and Friedman (1992), among others, it is clear that the destitute are marginalized and disassociated, which also means that they are often not part of communities that might help them to become non-desstitute, or assist them not to become destitute in the first place. In this sense “community” can signify (in the narrow sense) family, or (in the broader sense) a group of people living together and helping one another.

It would seem that people functioning within a healthy community have much less of a chance to become destitute. Firstly, because they are taken care of much better in a community than when isolated and cut off from the resources that a community provides. Secondly, because being part of a good community contributes to perceiving meaning in life (Seltzer & Miller, 1993:89).

Biblically the connectedness to community is important – in this sense it must be said that SHALOM, as the aim of helping the destitute, is a community word. True SHALOM can only be attained in community (a point discussed in the following Chapter).

4.2.6 Continued rejection by people and systems (leading to distrust and self-ostracization)
Kraybill (2003:20) describes this phenomenon as a “revolving slate”. Simply put, this means that people who have been rejected often, become more and more careful about trusting others. They will keep their distance, often not even allowing those who really want to help to come close. They will also tend to reject people who try to build relationships with them before they can (potentially) be rejected by that person. This makes helping the destitute extremely difficult, because they have often experienced rejection, both from other people, and from society as a whole.
Kraybill (2003: 3) states that the first actions in the helping process must always centre on “building trust” and “instilling hope”, because most destitute people have experienced at least a degree of rejection, and are therefore distrustful of helpers.

4.3 Personal development problems

This refers to a range of personal development issues affecting people’s potential to become destitute or to stay destitute.

4.3.1 Lack of education, knowledge and skills

Lack of these contributes to destitution in two ways, namely (1) by disabling already destitute people from finding jobs and a steady source of income, and (2) by raising up a generation of unskilled young people who are at greater risk of becoming destitute, because they did not enjoy access to good education.

According to Meyers (1999:84) it “is obvious that poverty is caused in part by lack of knowledge and technical information”. Linda Siegle (2006:1), in an article entitled “Missed opportunities: The case for investment in learning and skills for homeless people”, is quoted as remarking:

Learning changes lives, transforms communities and can bring people from the margins to the mainstream of life. We abhor the waste of human potential that Crisis’s research highlights. Every day that goes by without this investment delays changes in homeless people’s lives and increases social exclusion and entrenchment into a homeless lifestyle.

In the same article, Shaks Ghosh (2006: Foreword) is quoted as commenting, “Our work at Crisis gives us first hand experience of the massive difference that learning and skills can make to the lives of homeless people”.

In South Africa, with its legacy of apartheid, lack of education is much more prevalent among certain population groups, thereby contributing to poverty amongst those groups. As Gewertz (2005:1) observes, until 1995 when apartheid ended in South Africa, the government spent 12 times more on the education of white children than on black children. This blatantly discriminatory policy has left a troublesome legacy of
prevalent poverty among black people in South Africa: they simply lack the education needed to make progress.

As well as increasing the skills of destitute people and improving their employability, engagement in learning and skills activities can also improve mental health (SEU, 2004:5) and reduce problematic substance misuse (Addaction, 2005:1) or committing offences (SEU, 2002:3). Hope (2006) considers that education, training and employment are the key routes out of poverty and homelessness.

Warnes (2007:298-299) explains how engagement in learning and skills development helps to bring an end to homelessness in a number of ways:

- It builds confidence and self esteem – and through these the belief that positive change is possible.
- It gives people structure, purpose and meaning in their lives – all of which are essential first steps to goal-setting and achievement.
- It equips people with the skills necessary to interact successfully both in work and non-work settings – and thereby their chances of ending their social exclusion.
- It tackles boredom and widens social networks – thereby helping individuals to leave behind negative past behaviours and peer influences.
- It improves the ability to access and make use of services – thereby increasing independence and ensuring that wider needs are more likely to be met.
- It improves employability – and thereby the chance of ending financial exclusion.

### 4.3.2 Lack of access to knowledge and information

This analysis can be linked to the concept of marginalization as postulated by Friedman (1992) above. The premise is simple: the poor, especially the destitute living on the streets, do not have access to the internet, newspapers or other sources of information that could guide them to services or employment or any number of other helpful insights. For example, figures from Internet World Stats (2007) indicated that only 7.4 percent of the population of South Africa enjoyed ready access to and routinely used the Internet in
2006, and that this small group typically consisted of the more affluent members of our society.

4.3.3 Lack of meaning and identity
Seltzer and Miller (1993:76) refer to “a desire held by many individuals to understand life from a deeper frame of reference than social circumstances”. The basic question is, “why am I here, and what is the meaning of life?” It would seem that for most destitute people their sense of “who they are” as persons is tied to making sense of their lives (1993:82).

Seltzer and Miller (1993:83) extend this point:

The reasons for asking questions on the meaning of life are tied to the basic elements of human dignity. To become aware that we have lost the capacity to choose leads us to ask who, in fact is in control, and why we have been deprived of this basic right to make decisions for ourselves. To see everything as chaotic and unpredictable drives us to search for something understandable, stable, and constant in the midst of the terror and flux of our daily lives. To be stifled in expressing or living out who we feel ourselves to be – and to be cut off from the community that used to give our lives coherence – pushes us to ask deeper questions about the self, and about the community of faith or meaning that seems so hidden by our current alienation and isolation (:83).

4.3.4 Lack of access to “culture”
According to the World Bank (2007:1), development processes intended to reduce poverty must understand culture, or take culture into account, for two reasons: (1) culture influences what is valued in a society; in particular, it shapes the “ends” of development that are valuable to the poor; and (2) culture influences how individuals, communities, informal and formal institutions respond to developmental changes, so that knowledge of culture(s) is a means to effective poverty reduction.

The term “culture” is used or defined in two ways within the World Bank (2007:1). The first, wider, definition describes the particular shared values, beliefs, knowledge, skills and practices that underpin behaviour by members of a social group at a particular point in time (with potentially good and bad effects on processes of poverty reduction). The second definition refers to the creative expression, skills, traditional knowledge and cultural resources that form part of the lives of people and societies, and can form a basis for social engagement and development of enterprise. These include, for
example, craft and design, oral and written history and literature, music, drama, dance, visual arts, celebrations, indigenous knowledge of botanical properties and medicinal applications, architectural forms, historic sites, and traditional technologies.

Culture serves as a point of reference for an individual (creating a sense of belonging and purpose) and as a valued basis for conduct or action. The premise is that “good culture” should help to keep people from becoming destitute, whereas “bad culture”, like the “culture of poverty”, will promote poverty and destitution. In the case of the destitute, they are often so isolated and impoverished that they have little access to culture or cultural values that can serve as an anchor against the storms of life. On the other hand, if we accept the “culture of poverty theory”, when people become entrapped in the “culture of poverty”, they will tend to adopt a culture that confines them in poverty, instead of helping them grow out of poverty and destitution.

It should be stated that even the destitute express themselves culturally, and even the poorest of the poor have some access to culture. However, when access to cultural resources is denied or destroyed to some degree, or where cultural expression that would empower people out of destitution is denied, we are talking of a lack of access to that culture which would empower people not to be destitute.

4.3.5 Wrong worldview

Worldview refers to the way in which an individual will view her or his world. According to Wikipedia, the term denotes a comprehensive set of opinions, seen as an organic unity, about the world as the medium and exercise of human existence. This includes various dimensions of human perception and experience such as knowledge, politics, economics, religion, culture, science, and ethics.

The Christian thinker James W. Sire (2004:15-16) defines a worldview as:

…a set of presuppositions (assumptions which may be true, partially true or entirely false) which we hold (consciously or subconsciously, consistently or inconsistently) about the basic makeup of our world.

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He suggests that “we should all think in terms of worldviews, that is, with a consciousness not only of our own way of thought but also that of other people, so that we can first understand and then genuinely communicate with others in our pluralistic society”. (2004:15-16).

An example of a detrimental worldview would be evident in the comment, “poor people have no chance in this world, so why try?” Regardless of the degree to which such a worldview holds true, it will influence the actions of the person holding that worldview. The opposite is also true. For example, persons holding on to a worldview that sees opportunities and grasps them, are more likely to succeed in whatever they attempt, and less likely to become destitute.

4.3.6 Generational carry over of “culture of poverty” tendencies
The basic premise, developed by various authors from Lewis (1959) to Landon (2006), is that a faulty culture (of poverty) is carried over from generation to generation, and then becomes the accepted norm – thereby keeping people trapped in that culture (see above).

4.3.7 Adaptation to life on the streets
From the work of Morse (1982) and Hopper et al. (1982), adaptation to life on the streets refers to the tendency that destitute people, as they adapt more and more to life on the streets, will become less and less capable of transition or reintegration back into society (see above).

4.4 Spiritual problems

4.4.1 Spiritual poverty
Biblically, the idea of spiritual poverty is that of a characteristic which can occur among both the rich and the poor. However, when exploring possible causes for destitution, Meyers refers to the power of the spirit world, witchcraft and shamans and their “very significant contribution to making and keeping people poor” (Meyers, 1999:85). He explains this (perhaps from a slightly westernized viewpoint) in the following way: “Money is spent on charms for protection and time is lost to feast days, all in an attempt
to manage these power relationships. Technical improvements are refused for fear of the reaction of ancestors or the spirit world.” (1999:86).

By default this would imply dysfunctional and broken relationships with God, each other, the community and creation. Meyers expands this point in arguing that the nature of poverty is fundamentally relational. “Poverty is the results of relationships that do not work, that are not just, that are not for life, and that are not harmonious and enjoyable” (Meyers, 1999:86). “Sin is what distorts these relationships…When God is on the sidelines and written out of our story, we do not treat each other well.” He enquires,

Why does the poverty trap work as it does? Why are the poor denied access to social power? What is at the root of the web of lies and disempowerment that results? Why are there constraints to growth, with a group of people standing behind each limitation and restriction? Because of deceptive and dominating relationships, because we are unable to love God and neighbour, because of sin…Without a strong theology of sin, comprehensive explanations for poverty are hard to come by (1999:88).

4.4.2 Personal sin and spiritual blindness
As Christian (1994:252) remarks, these refer to the impact of the fall and sin on individual human beings, as well as to the additional impact of deception by principalities and powers. The powerlessness of the poor is reinforced by the fear and deceit created by “the god of this world that has blinded the minds of unbelievers” (2 Cor. 4:4) and the “trap of the devil who has taken them captive to do his will” (2 Tim. 2:26) (1994:252). In this way Christian affirms that it is not simply human beings, and the systems in which they live, that create and sustain poverty. There is a cosmic adversary which works against life (1994:252).

Maggay (1994:82) adds that “social action is a confrontation with the powers that be. We are, ultimately, not battling against flesh and blood, nor merely dismantling unjust social systems; we are confronting the powers in their social and cosmic dimensions”.

74
5 Exploring “outside-in” issues

5.1 Cultural problems

5.1.1 Racism, racial discrimination and racial prejudice (Apartheid)
The racism that was integral to apartheid has not been erased in the few short years of our democracy. Racism continues to drive wedges in our society that undermine our national progress, advancement, and security (SACLA, 2003:5)

Poverty and unemployment cannot be separated from race. As Loots (1997:2) states, unemployment cannot be understood without reference to the dynamics of race and gender in South Africa. The gender distribution of unemployment indicates that the rate of unemployment is higher among women than among men. On average, 37,3% of all economically active women are unemployed in comparison with 24,6% of economically active males (Loots, 1997: 4). However, among African women the unemployment rate is as high as 46,9% (CSS, 1996:45). Concerning the racial distribution of unemployment, the highest unemployment rate occurs among Africans, where approximately 40% on average lack any formal or informal employment opportunity, while those percentages for coloureds, Asians and whites are 23,4%, 16% and 7,2% respectively (Loots, 1997: 4). These statistics demonstrate that unemployment displays definite racial and gender dimensions.

Living standards are closely correlated with race in South Africa, as illustrated in the above sections. While poverty is not confined to any one racial group in South Africa, it is concentrated among Blacks in particular. Many of the apartheid measures, including the extensive welfare system available to White people, the higher quality of education available to White students, and the formal and informal job reservations for White workers, were specifically designed to prevent poverty among the White population. Poverty among Whites is close to zero.

With Blacks comprising 77% of the population, the high incidence and severity of poverty amongst them ensures that they account for 95% of the poverty gap, with the
remaining 3% largely accounting for the poverty among Coloureds, and only 1% each being shared by the Indians and Whites, respectively (Loots, 1997:5).

5.1.2 Public apathy
Many researchers refer to public apathy as a contributing factor that sustains poverty and destitution (Hebden, 2007; Marsh & Vegeris, 2004; Dreze, 1997). The argument is simple: if the public were to become more involved in the fight against poverty and all its problems, this would go a long way towards the eradication of this blight on society. Alan Marsh (In Marsh & Vegeris, 2004:1), deputy director of the Policy Studies Institute, comments that society has always held a “default” attitude to poverty.

Bartle (2005:2-3) goes so far as to name apathy as one of the “big five” factors that contribute to and sustain poverty (the other four are disease, dependency, dishonesty and ignorance). He specifically discusses factors vs. causes, where a "factor" and a "cause" are not quite the same thing. A "cause" can be defined as something that contributes to the origin of a problem such as poverty, while a "factor" can be viewed as something that contributes to its continuation after it already exists. (2005:2). He describes apathy as occurring “when people do not care, or when they feel so powerless that they do not try to change things, to right a wrong, to fix a mistake, or to improve conditions” (2005:3).

Apathy often goes hand in hand with ignorance; people simply do not know poverty or about poverty, especially in the developed world. This constitutes a form of denial, because “I don’t experience poverty or its effects, so it is not part of my world”. It also has to do with society’s attitude of superiority towards the poor, an attitude that promotes exclusion. There is a culture of categorizing people as “deserving” or “undeserving” of support.

The “War on Poverty declaration” (1998:1) signed by President Mandela and others addresses apathy when it avers that “All of society needs to be involved in the struggle for social development. The very fabric of our society, the soul of our
communities, needs to be rebuilt. We need a new moral order based on *ubuntu* that brings compassion and humanity into our homes and neighbourhoods”.

### 5.1.3 Gender inequality

Gender inequity contributes to the risk of people becoming destitute by hindering those with a specific gender from participating in good jobs with adequate salaries and opportunities. In South Africa (as in the rest of the world), women seem to be the victims of gender inequity.

Sexism (gender inequity) is a scourge affecting every aspect of South African life, and it not only leads to the underutilization of human potential but produces a level of violence and discrimination that tears apart the very fabric of our society (SACLA 2003:2).

Daley (2004), in an article published in the *New York Times*, remarks that the status of women in South Africa, the “level of sexism” as she calls it, astonished her in comparison to that in the USA. Some of South Africa's most prominent women, including Ramphela Mamphele (2005:1-2), who managed the University of Cape Town, argue that sexism is actually a bigger problem in Africa than racism.

### 5.2 Institutional problems

#### 5.2.1 State failure

In South Africa, as in the world, many problems are associated with the system of aid (and/or welfare). It would seem that the state cannot keep up with the growing problem of poverty. The bigger the problem, the larger the necessary system of aid and welfare must be. This is part of the problem facing institutions using a “deficiency-based approach”, also called a “needs-based approach”. In such approaches, the state is seen as, and must act as, a saviour and helper. In opposition to this, asset-based approaches facilitate communities assisting themselves. Such approaches would actually lighten the load on state welfare systems. This is discussed in detail in later chapters.
The success and/or failure of the state in South Africa can be much debated, and the current government is evaluated by the “Country Report on Human Rights Practices of 2006”. However, “state failure” reflects a global and local challenge to government to make good on its stated intentions, and as such must be seen as advocacy to challenge the state, rather than criticize the state.

Narayan and Petesch (2002:487-493) define state failure in this context as a failure to serve poor people. They focus on states rather than on other developmental actors, because governments lay down the essential policy environment that affects the speed and quality of development. Government policy shapes the actions of poor people, the private sector, NGO’s and donors. These authors add that a difficult lesson of development has been that it matters not only what actions are taken to reduce poverty, but also how these development decisions are made, acted upon, and evaluated.

They continue by stating that the problem is poverty, not poor people. This statement separates the issues in an important way. Those who care most about reducing poverty are the poor people themselves. Therefore, effective poverty reduction must tap into the motivation, desire, determination, imagination, knowledge, networks, and organizations of impoverished men, women and children. This necessitates asset-based approaches as opposed to needs-based approaches. Given the scale of the problem, any poverty reduction strategy must mobilize the energy of poor people to take effective action and make them essential partners in development. From the findings of their research the said authors suggest five actions to reorient states to become more effective agents of poverty reduction. They call these actions an “Empowering Approach to Development” (Narayan and Petesch, 2002: 487-493). These actions include (1) promoting pro-poor economic policies; (2) investing in poor people’s assets and capabilities; (3) supporting partnerships with poor people; (4) addressing gender inequity and children’s vulnerability and (5) protecting poor people’s rights

5.2.2 Lack of appropriate social assistance and services
Often services are simply not available, especially in developing countries that cannot afford services, and where the destitute cannot pay for those services. Also, the destitute
often struggle to gain entry into services, for a variety of reasons (such as the lack of a permanent address). In addition, services are often not accessible, or appropriate to the problems of the destitute (Morse, 1992:3–14). This includes the lack of (1) mental health care and policies; (2) of integrated care for convicts (after leaving prison); (3) of coordination and cooperation between helpers (organizations and services) and (4) of affordable health care.

Regarding the last mentioned, this remains a challenge for families and individuals struggling to pay the rent: a serious illness or disability can start a downward spiral into destitution, beginning with a lost job, depletion of savings to pay for care, and eventual eviction. Most, if not all people in South Africa living in poverty carry no health insurance of any kind, because it is simply too expensive, especially in our country. And while public hospital services are available, people are often obliged to wait more than a day to be helped, after they have struggled to reach the hospital in the first place, since health services are not readily accessible to people, especially the poor.

Now bring HIV/AIDS into the picture: a sickness leading to numerous health problems, necessitating continued high-cost health interventions.

There are numerous barriers to treatment and recovery opportunities. Barrett (2004:2-3) explains the challenges of health care in South Africa as follows:

The most pressing (challenges) include: low pay for health workers; despair about AIDS and the government's reluctance to provide clear treatment guidelines; lack of basic infrastructure such as roads and telephones in remote rural areas, which makes TB testing difficult (South Africa has the highest TB rates in the world, fanned by HIV); and the growth of multi-drug resistant TB, which has already killed health workers. To add to this, there is a high incidence of poverty-related illnesses, including TB, malaria, cholera, hepatitis B, and measles. Malnutrition is rife – stunting affects up to 27% of children. About 2.5 million people are malnourished and a further 14 million at risk. There is concern that the massive poverty-alleviation program, together with improvements in water supply, sanitation, nutrition, and vaccination, could be submerged by the tidal wave of HIV. Already AIDS patients fill 40% of beds in some hospitals. (2004: 2-3)

5.2.3 Difficulty accessing systems of help
“Systems of help” encompass welfare systems and services, even NGO’s and CBO’s, including case management, health services, housing services etc. Often the destitute
cannot access these services of help; because (1) they do not know about available services; (2) experience transport problems; (3) some services require a valid ID and/or address to be accessed; (4) services are simply not available.

According to Bhorat et al. (2006:47) there has been an increase in the delivery of government services between 1993 and 2004 in South Africa. However, African, rural and female-headed households remained particularly vulnerable, with the bottom group of households witnessing relatively slower increases in their access to services and assets between 1993 and 2004. Hence, poor people still experience severe problems accessing these services.

5.3 Global society problems

This phrase refers to problems that operate on a worldwide scale to shape the world we live in, by impacting on our local context as well.

5.3.1 Poverty

Poverty is perceived by many as the underlying problem giving rise to a variety of other difficulties leading to destitution. According to the National Coalition for the Destitute (1998:1) two trends are largely responsible for the rise in destitution in the world, namely a growing shortage of affordable housing and a simultaneous increase in poverty.

The Coalition (1998:2-5) adds that destitution and poverty are inextricably linked. Poor people are frequently unable to pay for housing, food, child care, health care, and education. Difficult choices must be made when limited resources cover only some of these necessities. Often it is housing, which absorbs a high proportion of income, that must be dropped. Being poor means being an illness, an accident, or a pay cheque away from living on the streets.

While I do not concur with the viewpoint that poverty underlies all problems leading to destitution, it cannot be denied that poverty most often does play a role in the impact of other problems contributing to destitution: for instance, a poor person will suffer more inconvenience and distress from medical problems than a person able to
afford good medical care. It also cannot be denied that poverty often engenders other problems leading to destitution. Helpers will need to understand poverty and its many resulting problems if they really want to empower destitute people. Viv Grigg (1992:68) makes an excellent point: “The worker among the poor must be conversant with the range of causes and types of poverty. At the same time, he or she must somehow not be overly pre-occupied with analysis beyond that which facilitates effective, non destructive action.”

Poverty is a global issue that creates a backdrop for such problems in the local South African context. Anup Shah (2003) runs and updates a website concerned with the facts and figures surrounding global poverty. The statistics are shocking. He quotes numerous sources and studies that prove his findings. Also shocking are the emerging trends – poverty and inequality are on the increase.


- Half the world — nearly three billion people — live on less than two dollars a day.
- The GDP (Gross Domestic Product) of the poorest 48 nations (i.e. a quarter of the world’s countries) is less than the wealth of the world’s three richest people combined.
- The poorer the country, the more likely it is that debt repayments are being extracted directly from people who neither contracted the loans nor received any of the money.
- 20% of the population in the developed nations consume 86% of the world’s goods.
- The top fifth of the world’s people in the richest countries enjoy 82% of the expanding export trade and 68% of foreign direct investment — the bottom fifth, barely more than 1%.
- In 1960, the 20% of the world’s people in the richest countries had 30 times the income of the poorest 20% — in 1997, 74 times as much.
- An analysis of long-term trends shows that the distance between the richest and poorest countries was about:
  o 3 to 1 in 1820
  o 11 to 1 in 1913
  o 35 to 1 in 1950
  o 44 to 1 in 1973
  o 72 to 1 in 1992.
- “The lives of 1.7 million children will be needlessly lost this year [2000] because world governments have failed to reduce poverty levels”
- The developing world now spends $13 on debt repayment for every $1 it receives in grants.
- A few hundred millionaires now own as much wealth as the world’s poorest 2.5 billion people.
- “The 48 poorest countries account for less than 0.4 per cent of global exports.”
- “Approximately 790 million people in the developing world are still chronically undernourished, almost two-thirds of whom reside in Asia and the Pacific.”
- According to UNICEF, 30,000 children die each day due to poverty. And they “die quietly in some of the poorest villages on earth, far removed from the scrutiny and the conscience of the world. Being meek and weak in life makes these dying multitudes even more invisible in death.”
- That is, about 210,000 children each week, or just under 11 million children under five years of age, each year.

81
His findings are echoed by Narayan, Deepa, Petesch & Patti (2002:461-467) who declare that poverty remains an enormous problem worldwide, despite major reductions over the past 50 years. Within the developing countries, about one third of the population lives on less than US$1 a day. (The World Bank defines poverty as an income of less than US$1 per day, using purchasing power parity: in other words, exchange rates adjusted to the local currency.) By this measure, although the percentage of the world’s population living in poverty declined slightly between 1987 and 1993 (from 30.1 percent to 29.4 percent), the absolute number of people living in poverty increased from 1.2 billion to 1.3 billion. Although some Asian countries, such as Indonesia, have made considerable progress in reducing poverty, in South Asia, progress has been slow. In sub-Saharan Africa and in Latin America and the Caribbean, the percentage of the population living in poverty actually increased slightly between 1987 and 1993.

More recent poverty statistics state that 2.8 billion persons live on less than two dollars a day. Much has been learned over the last century about how to reduce poverty, yet it still persists, according to Narayan, Deepa, Petesch & Patti (2002:462), who also argue that the concept of poverty implies the incapacity to become inserted in the

- For economic growth and almost all of the other indicators, the last 20 years [of the current form of globalization, from 1980 - 2000] have shown a very clear decline in progress as compared with the previous two decades [1960 - 1980]. For each indicator, countries were divided into five roughly equal groups, according to what level the countries had achieved by the start of the period (1960 or 1980). Among the findings:
  - Growth: The fall in economic growth rates was most pronounced and across the board for all groups or countries.
  - Life Expectancy: Progress in life expectancy was also reduced for 4 out of the 5 groups of countries, with the exception of the highest group (life expectancy 69-76 years).
  - Infant and Child Mortality: Progress in reducing infant mortality was also considerably slower during the period of globalization (1980-1998) than over the previous two decades.
  - Education and literacy: Progress in education also slowed during the period of globalization.
- The world’s 497 billionaires in 2001 registered a combined wealth of $1.54 trillion, well over the combined gross national products of all the nations of sub-Saharan Africa ($929.3 billion) or those of the oil-rich regions of the Middle East and North Africa ($1.34 trillion). This is also greater than the combined incomes of the poorest half of humanity.
socioeconomic environment in a way that continually allows for the satisfaction of the basic necessities of life (2002:463).

The *New York Times* in one of its email updates, in its Quote of the Day section for July 18, 2001, recorded the following quote by President Bush: “A world where some live in comfort and plenty, while half of the human race lives on less than $2 a day, is neither just, nor stable.”

A number of issues can be discerned regarding the endemic poverty worldwide that impacts on destitution, globally but also in South Africa. Among these are the escalating cost of living, growing social and economic inequality and economic decline.

Economic factors such as the rising oil price have an effect, because increased transport costs make it more and more difficult for the marginalized poor, who live on the peripheries, to reach their jobs, or to seek for work.

### 5.3.2 Dysfunctional economic ethos

This term refers to a global tendency where the rich become richer, often through exploitation and suppression, or by means of corruption, while the poor become poorer.


Add to this decline the factors of unemployment, and the exploitation of the poor as “cheap labour”, and the picture becomes darker. "Unemployment has been internationalized", capital migrates from one country to another in a perpetual search for cheaper supplies of labour (Chossudovsky, 1998: 23-25). According to the ILO (2005:3), the global corporation minimizes labour costs on a global level. Real wages in the Third World and Eastern Europe are as much as seventy times lower than in the US, Western Europe or Japan: the possibilities of production being shifted to the former areas are immense given the mass of cheap impoverished workers throughout the world.
While mainstream economics stresses the need to allocate society's "scarce resources", the harsh social realities are in marked contrast to the dominant economic dogma: industrial plants are closed down, small- and medium-sized enterprises are driven into bankruptcy, professional workers and civil servants are laid off, human and physical capital stands idle in the name of "efficiency". The drive is towards the "efficient" use of society's resources at the micro-economic level. At the macro-economic level, however, exactly the opposite situation obtains: resources are not used "efficiently": i.e. with large amounts of unused industrial capacity and millions of unemployed workers, modern capitalism is totally incapable of mobilizing these untapped human and material resources (ILO, 2005:3-4).

Corruption adds greatly to the ongoing problem of destitution. As Bartle (2005:3) asserts, when resources that are intended to be used for community services or facilities are diverted into the private pockets of someone in a position of power, there is more than morality at stake here. He explains:

The amount of money that is extorted or embezzled is not the amount of lowering of wealth to the community. Economists tell of the "multiplier effect." Where new wealth is invested, the positive effect on the economy is more than the amount created. When investment money is taken out of circulation, the amount of wealth by which the community is deprived is greater than the amount gained by the embezzler. When a Government official takes a 100 dollar bribe, social investment is decreased by as much as a 400 dollar decrease in the wealth of the society (2005:3).

5.3.3 Famine and hunger
Can we link destitution and hunger? It would seem so. While living on the streets, most destitute people go hungry. This physical state consequently undermines the functioning and health of the person, putting them at even greater risk of staying destitute. A person who is hungry, cannot stay healthy, cannot function, and is therefore at greater risk of becoming destitute.

We often hear about the world running out of enough food to feed our growing population. For various reasons, however, that is not likely. The overwhelming evidence
indicates that people are not hungry because of a lack of food; they are hungry because they do not have the money to pay for it.

According to the World Hunger Program (2002:1-2), starvation clearly implies social, political, or economic failures on the part of local, state, or national governments to provide for their citizens. The Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO, 2001:2-4) comments that aid programmes or governments may take up some of the slack by purchasing food from producers and distributing it; but this might even encourage destitution, as people become dependent upon handouts.

This means that ending hunger requires doing away with poverty, or, at the very least, ensuring that people have enough money or the means to acquire it, in order to buy, and hence create a market demand for, food.

5.3.4 Disasters
Natural hazards represent a main source of risk for the poor, and disasters are a downward trigger for poverty. Natural catastrophes are generally defined in three main categories: windstorm, flood and hurricane (Freeman 1999:3).


Freeman (1999:1-8) also stresses the impact of natural disasters on poverty, as well as the cost of repairs and recovery after disasters. Natural disasters can contribute largely to people becoming destitute, either in the short term or in the longer term, especially in developing countries.

5.3.5 Urbanization

Who made us Poor?
Slum children
Longing for a piece of bread,
abandoned
no one reaching them, touching them.
Broken homes,
Lack of love,
Slum millions needing a Saviour.
Go, live down, among,
Proclaim Calvary’s love song:
Salvation of the suffering lies in Him.
For in Him the structures
of the mega cities integrate

The destitute can be considered migrants of the city. They travel from city to city, forever seeking, seldom finding. What is needed is mechanisms of adaptation to their society. Meister (in Grigg, 1992: 70), in describing squatters, identifies a typical path followed by migrants:

1. The individual brings from the country the sum total of standards and values that prevail in her or his own environment and clings to the same traditions in town. With the destitute, the standards are usually very low, working hand in hand with poor values, mostly because of broken homes. Most often the person that eventually becomes destitute received a poor upbringing, resulting in a weak character and low standards.

2. The new mode of life and rural values clash. The migrant fails to find steady work. The children fall under the influence of other displaced urban children. The father loses control, and former values are repudiated. On heavy drinking and desertion, the family unit disintegrates. Who becomes destitute in this picture? The father, because of drinking, the guilt of a broken family, and the loss of values, has the potential to become destitute, especially if there is a lack of support systems. The children potentially grow up to become destitute. And the
mother struggles till she can struggle no more, and gives up, ending in a shelter for the destitute.

3. The migrant comes to accept urban life. He or she experiences some job successes and begins to develop urban goals in terms of desirable places to live, and preferences for consumer goods, and starts participating in formal groups. Although some migrants adapt by delinquency and others through participation and leadership in migrant development programs, it is important to emphasize that, in most cases, there is successful urban adaptation.

Most of the destitute people who arrive in shelters came as migrants into the city, searching for jobs, looking for the better life, but, unable to adapt, ending up on the street.

J.R. McCreary (In Grigg 1992:70-71) discusses these experiences along the same lines. He writes:

1. First, there is a loss of direct contact with indigenous social controls and missions influence, and a non-acceptance of responsibility for collateral kin.
2. The extended family loses its supportive function, although kinship networks continue to function, placing additional strain on traditional values.
3. A new urban social structure develops, with the mother moving into the centre of the family, and the father becoming a declining figure.
4. Youth form marginal groups and tend to lose direction. Disorientation at the personal level is expressed in delinquency, violence, prostitution and excessive drinking (or substance abuse). This “dysfunctionality” becomes an internal problem, with the potential to lead to destitution.

In this way urbanization contributes to destitution: it literally “uproots” people, leaving them anchorless, for they have lost their communities.

5.4 Micro-societal problems

This term refers to problems that operate more in the local context of South Africa, causing and promoting destitution. This study deals not only with destitution in Tshwane
(my own personal immediate context), but with destitution in South Africa: therefore poverty as it manifests itself in South Africa and also reflects in Tshwane is explored.

5.4.1 Poverty in SA

Loots (1997:6) reveals that at that stage 16.6% of South Africans received 72.2% of all the income in the country, and a half of these people were then black. Another 16.6% received 17.2% of income, and only 1.6% of these were black. At the very bottom of our society were 67% of our population sharing 10.6% of the total income, and only 2% of this group were white.

The picture of poverty in the world is echoed in the South African context, even if the percentages might differ. However, it would seem that there is one important difference: the effects of apartheid. In South Africa, it is clear from the facts and statistics that the poverty problem manifests much more in our black communities than in any others.

In the “War on Poverty Declaration” (1998:1-2), some profound statements were made regarding poverty in South Africa. The signatories\(^9\) averred that “The War On Poverty” is South Africa's most important priority and our greatest challenge. Eradicating poverty is essential to consolidate the gains of our new democracy. It is a pre-condition for social justice, peace and security in our land. The Declaration also stated that South Africa today is burdened with unacceptable levels of inequality between rich and poor (1998:1).

At the World Summit for Social Development, our Government committed itself to enhance social development "so that all men and women, especially those living in poverty, may lead satisfying lives and contribute to the wellbeing of their families, their communities and humankind" (1998:1).

\(^9\) Signatories to the SA War on Poverty Declaration:
President Mandela and the South African Cabinet, the South African Council of Churches, the South African NGO Coalition, the Homeless People's Federation, the United Nations Development Program, the United Nations Children's Fund, the Department of Welfare, the Congress of South African Trade Unions, the National Council of Trade Unions, and the South African Grantmaker's Association.
The signatories also declared that poverty concerns lack of access, lack of power, lack of income and resources to make choices and take advantage of opportunities. “Many of our people live below the breadline, exposed to persistent hunger, disease, illiteracy, unemployment and homelessness. Apartheid has left us with a legacy of economic and social distress” (War on Poverty Declaration, 1998:1).

Sadly, and in contrast to the goals stated by the above declaration, it would seem that the poverty problem in SA has grown rather than diminished. Malan & Van Tonder (2005:1), in exploring unemployment in South Africa, observe that, while poverty and suffering are distributed more evenly in 2005 among racial groups than before, the realities have not really changed in terms of unemployment levels.

According to SACLA (2003), 22 million South Africans live below the poverty line, which is based on a household income of less than R401 a month. In other words, over one half of all South Africans live in poverty. As inflation and the cost of living increase daily, the ability that households will survive is threatened.

According to PISA (Poverty and Inequality in South Africa, 1998:2-3), the Eastern Cape and the Northern Province report amongst the highest poverty rates. In these provinces, almost three-quarters of the population are poor, mostly Blacks. In contrast, the poverty rates in Gauteng and the Western Cape are both under 20%. Poverty is also deeply rooted in the Eastern Cape, the Free State, and Northern Province. As a result, these three provinces account for a disproportionate share of the total poverty gap. While containing only 36% of the population, poor households in these provinces contribute 51% of the total poverty gap. In contrast, Gauteng and the Western Cape make up only 8% of the total poverty gap, despite being home to 26% of the population.

These figures have been updated in an article by Van Tonder (2002) in Rapport (a national newspaper). According to this article, which is based on figures and statistics provided by GlobalInsight – Centurion (2002:2), almost half of South Africa is living in
poverty. The level of poverty increased from 40.5% in 1996 to 48.9% in 2002. He states that the poverty line in South Africa, projected from the 1995 and 1996 Government statistics, for 2001, indicates that a family is considered “poor” or to be “living in poverty” if the monthly income of that family is less than R1 278.

According to the statistics mentioned in this article, the Eastern Cape is still the poorest province with 67.4% living in poverty (compared to the 64% of 2000). Limpopo Province is next in line with 63.5%. Poverty in the Western Cape increased from 19.9% in 2000 to 21.2% in 2002. Gauteng records a figure of 28.3%. In six of the nine provinces of South Africa, therefore, more than half the people live in poverty.

Bellville reports a poverty indication of 8.48%, the area with the lowest poverty rate. Regarding the large cities, Cape Town records the lowest poverty indication, 8.85%, followed by Pretoria with 12.2%.

Joblessness in the country as a whole increased to 41.5% (including those who stopped searching for a job). Joblessness in the Eastern Cape, the poorest province, is 60.5%. The close correlation between joblessness and poverty is once again highlighted by the fact that the Western Cape, the province with the lowest joblessness (21.6%), also reports the least poverty.

The above analysis indicates how poverty follows the trends that have previously been identified. It shows clearly that poverty in South Africa is racially based and that it is distributed unequally amongst the different racial groups in the country. It furthermore indicates that the Black and Coloured racial groups are the most impoverished and that some provinces are more affected than others.

In an article by De Swart and Du Toit (2005:1) titled “Staying Poor in South Africa”, the writers observe that

Since the end of apartheid in 1994, the South African Government has achieved political stability, improved social services and brought about steady national economic growth. At the same time, poverty and economic inequality along racial
lines have increased. Why is it that today, more than a quarter of all households remain trapped in long-term poverty?

In their opinion, “in South Africa, access to paid employment is the most important factor in the poverty status of households. This is partly because colonial land-grabbing and apartheid destroyed productive rural economies in order to create a cheap labour force” (2005:1).

The most important obstacle to escaping from poverty was the lack of access to basic economic resources like land. In addition, prices for staples such as maize are now set on world markets, so that poor households are directly affected by international currency changes and global trade liberalization. Households have to pay for basic social goods, including transport. This increases their vulnerability and the risk of becoming trapped in debt (2005:1).

In South Africa, additional issues contribute to poverty, and eventually also to destitution. These include the high crime rate, which inhibits investment by overseas companies, and HIV/AIDS, family disintegration, racism and sexism.

National deficits affect the situation, since interest must be paid to institutions like the World Bank, so that less money is available for development or welfare. It is clear that the poor countries in the world are becoming poorer, while the rich countries, which develop much faster because of more resources, become richer. This increases inequality, becoming a vicious circle that actually leads to more people being unable to sustain themselves, and ending up on the street.

5.4.2 Lack of affordable housing

Housing is important for two reasons: (1) it provides shelter and a point of reference, but (2) some housing in specific neighbourhoods seems to promote destitution.

Culhane, Lee and Wachter (1996:327-365) found that neighbourhoods producing high levels of family destitution report high concentrations of poor female-headed households that include children under six years of age. The housing investigated in their study is the poorest in the city, and despite the fact that rents are the lowest available, residents still cannot afford them, with the consequence that housing is overcrowded and
many families double up, even though apartment vacancy rates are high. These conditions create a large pool of families at risk of destitution, of which it only takes a small percentage every week to fill the available destitute shelters.

In South Africa, a lack of affordable housing and the limited scale of housing assistance programs have likewise contributed to the current housing crisis and to destitution.

Rust (2005a: 3) researched the question of affordable housing in South Africa. According to her statistics, 1.6 million subsidized housing properties have been delivered to date. She states that, notwithstanding the rate of delivery, our housing backlog is said to be growing substantially: some estimates put this at between 1.9 and 2.4 million, though informal settlements, often suggested as a proxy for the housing backlog, are on their way to about 2.4 million households. Hence the housing backlog can be estimated at between 4.3 – 4.8 million houses.

In terms of housing affordability, Rust (2005:4) also states that, from the supply side, cheapest are the R36 700 RDP units. Thereafter, the next most affordable house costs at the very least about R120 000 but is more likely in the neighbourhood of R200 000. In Johannesburg’s Cosmo City, for example, where everyone is lauding this integrated settlement that will contain RDP houses mixed with bonded houses, the next cheapest house after the RDP house costs R230 000.

Rust (2005:4) continues:

So where does this leave the person in the RDP house, which much research has already highlighted is insufficient – it is too small, it has the most basic of fixtures – it doesn’t even have a ceiling or insulation, it is poorly designed… where will the person go if they want to move out of their RDP house, and they can afford a bank loan of say, R40 000? Let’s presume they can sell their own house for R40 000, that leaves them R80 000 housing affordability.

The gap between the number of affordable housing units and the number of people needing them has created a housing crisis for impoverished people. This problem is further aggravated by urbanization, which pushes up the demand for housing, which subsequently causes an increase in the price of housing, and a vicious circle starts. The
loss of affordable housing puts even greater numbers of people at risk of destitution (Rust 2005:2-3).

The lack of affordable housing has led to high rent burdens (rents which absorb a high proportion of income), overcrowding, and substandard housing. These phenomena, in turn, have not only forced many people to become destitute; they have put a large and growing number of people at risk of becoming destitute.

Housing assistance can make the difference between stable housing, precarious housing, or no housing at all. However, the demand for assisted housing clearly exceeds the supply.

Excessive waiting lists for public housing mean that people must remain in shelters or inadequate housing arrangements for longer. Consequently, there is less shelter space available for other destitute people, who must find shelter elsewhere or live on the streets.

5.4.3 Lack of employment

In an address by the president of Cosatu, John Gomomo (Gomomo, 1996:2) to the World Economic Forum on 23 May 1996, Cape Town, he offered an insight into the poverty problem in South Africa:

The fact that there was a 3,5% growth in the economy in South Africa in 1995 has not made the slightest impact on the lives of the unemployed, the homeless and those faced with poverty. The beneficiaries are the few shareholders. The facts are that very few jobs were created, and very few jobs are being created now.

As De Swart and Du Toit (2005:1) state, over the past decade, employers have chosen capital- rather than labour-intensive routes to competitiveness through increased mechanization (in South Africa specifically). Up to a million formal-sector jobs were lost. Unemployment has doubled in 10 years to over 30%. Incomes in black households fell by 19% between 1995 and 2000, while white incomes rose by 15%. Meanwhile, the poorest third of black households are falling into long-term destitution: even in the urban centres.
This state of affairs is also evident in the global sphere. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO, 2005:1), worldwide unemployment affects one billion people or nearly a third of the global workforce. Currently, half the world’s workers still do not earn enough to lift themselves and their families above the US $2 a day poverty line. World unemployment operates as a lever which "regulates" labour costs at a world level: the abundant supplies of cheap labour in the Third World (e.g. China with an estimated 200 million surplus workers) and the former Eastern bloc contribute to depressing the level of wages in the developed countries. Virtually all categories of the labour force (including the highly qualified, professional and scientific workers) are affected (ILO, 2005:2-3).

The unemployment figures continue to rise in South Africa. According to figures quoted at SACLA (2003:2), the current unemployment rate is above 30%, with the expanded definition reaching 46%. In other countries, financial analysts become worried because their unemployment is rising above 5%. This does not even compare to our situation. There are simply not enough jobs in South Africa.

According to statistics released by the International Labour Organization for 2004 (ILO, 2005:4), only 54.1% of the population in South Africa above the age of 15 is economically active in employment.

The unemployed are trapped: you need a job to have money, but it takes money to find a job. In order for people to find a job, they need money for transportation at the very least. More often, they need money for skills training, child care, and even resumés or clothing for interviews. It is not that the people of South Africa do not want to work. The twin problems are lack of jobs and the cycle of poverty that prevents the jobless from finding work. And for the very poor, a handout is just not enough to help them escape from a future they did not choose themselves (SACLA, 2003:2).

Media reports of a growing economy and low unemployment mask a number of important reasons as to why destitution persists, and, in some areas of the country, is
worsening. These include stagnant or falling incomes, and less secure jobs that offer fewer benefits. While the last few years have seen growth in real wages at all levels, these increases have not been enough to counteract a long pattern of stagnant and declining wages.

According to Bernstein and Hartmann (1999: 244-248), in addition to the erosion in the value of the minimum wage, factors contributing to wage declines include a steep drop in the number and bargaining power of unionized workers; a decline in manufacturing jobs and the corresponding expansion of lower-paying service-sector employment; globalization; and increased non-standard work, such as temporary and part-time employment. Declining wages, in turn, have put housing out of reach for many workers.

5.4.4 Urban redevelopment policies and displacement
Urban redevelopment and infrastructural rehabilitation have been suggested as the solutions to the rapidly declining urban centres in developing countries (Onibokun, 1999:371). Commercial and residential redevelopment presents cities with a fundamental dilemma. In order to restore their economic and fiscal vitality, cities must attract property investment by companies and households (Peterson, 1981:11). To achieve such investment, redevelopment has to occur at a scale that is competitive with contemporary suburban real estate development and that overcomes existing negative neighbourhood externalities found in economically distressed communities. Such redevelopment directly or indirectly leads to displacement of lower-income residents, raising concerns over political equity or fairness (Koebel, 1996:5).

It becomes important to understand displacement as a problem arising for the poor because of urban redevelopment. Schill and Nathan (in Koebel 1996:6) offer these defining characteristics of displacement. (1) Vacating the unit would be beyond the household's reasonable ability to control or prevent and would not be the result of a violation of the lease or other previously established occupancy condition. (2) The displacement action would make continued occupancy impossible, hazardous, or
unaffordable as a result of redevelopment or neighbourhood reinvestment. (3) Finally, the new tenants would be of a higher socio-economic status than the previous occupants.

A good example in the context of Tshwane would be the Salvokop redevelopment in Pretoria. Government decided to build a “Freedom Monument” in the area, with a concurrent upgrade of the Salvokop residential area. An extract from a brochure advertising the “Centre for Performing Arts” clearly illustrates this intention:

Salvokop has been designated the area for the development of the Nationally significant Freedom Heritage site. But this tourist attraction cannot survive on its own, and requires the establishment of a precinct that creates public interest to support it. Thus the once neglected Salvokop Precinct is the subject of heavy investment in order to cultivate its link with the Central Business District and establish development that encourages greater public involvement and economic sustainability (Words on the advertisement brochure)

This will obviously affect residential values, making renting unaffordable for the poor. Now they are displaced, most often to areas further away from the city, leading to higher travel costs, worse residential conditions, etc. Eventually this displacement precipitates a slide into poverty and even destitution.

5.4.5 Violence and crime
Violence remains one of the key challenges to our new democracy because it threatens the dignity, safety, security, and advancement of individuals and communities. Violence also contributes to a culture of distrust, hostility, fear, and retribution (SACLA, 2003:3).

Violence often drives people from their homes, and violence associated with political intimidation can keep people from their jobs, thus increasing the risk of destitution. Hunt considers that the root cause of violence in South Africa has not changed much since the apartheid era (2003:1). According to the Johannesburg-based Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVR), South Africa’s current high rate of violent crime is just as closely related to economic and social marginalization as it was during the 1980s (CSVR, 2003:2). Hence, in their words, “Understanding marginalization is very important in understanding the patterns of violence in South Africa” (CSVR, 2003:2).
Violence and crime go hand in hand. With the world’s highest reported incidents of murder and rape per capita, South Africa is faced with a crisis in crime that affects international confidence, domestic stability, and individual security (SACLA, 2003:2), in this way contributing to a general decline in society, leading to poverty and destitution.

5.4.6 Fertility rates, mortality rates
According to Haupt & Kane (1998:12), fertility refers to the actual reproductive performance of a population. It differs from fecundity, the physiological capability of couples to reproduce. Fertility, the number of live births occurring in a population, is affected by fecundity and also by the person’s age at marriage or cohabitation, the availability and use of family planning, economic development, the status of women, and the age-sex structure.

Presently one finds two schools of thought regarding the effect of population growth on economic development: one school argues that high population growth has a negative effect on development, while the other argues that a positive relationship or none exists between population growth and economic development. If we accept as true the argument that high population growth negatively affects economic growth, then it influences people’s lives and becomes a contributing factor in destitution. It stands to reason that a average family with eight members will experience more trouble feeding every member well, than another average family with only four members. Birth control education therefore also plays a role in combating poverty and destitution.

Most research on the above-mentioned subject proceeds from the assumption that high fertility is automatically and always a hinderance to socioeconomic wellbeing. Many research reports and sometimes common-sense knowledge have found this to be true in several societies and contexts (Chimere-Dan, 1996:31-39).

In terms of birth control, a strong linkage exists between contraceptive prevalence and women’s level of education. In South Africa, the teenage birth rate has been on the increase for the Black population, but has been declining where other racial groups are
concerned. Preferred family sizes are also much smaller in urban areas and among younger women since women have developed fairly low fertility aspirations. It was found that attitudes and practice in decision-making change and/or differ in tandem with the age of both men and women. Younger women were far more likely to take decisions jointly with their partner than women in the older age group. For most women financial and economic considerations play a very important role in limiting family size (Ministry for Welfare and Population Development, 1995:1-11).

In summary it can be said that bigger families imply a bigger financial burden. This leads to a greater risk of poverty and marginalization, thereby also increasing the risk of destitution.

5.4.7 Illegal immigration
South Africa experiences major problems regarding illegal immigration, mostly from Mozambique (Solomon, 1996:3). Reitzes (1997:6) records that according to the former Minister of Home Affairs, Dr. Mangosuthu Buthelezi, there were between 2,5 and 5 million illegal immigrants currently residing in South Africa (in 1997). These figures were based on the numbers of repatriations, of illegal border crossings, and of people who overstayed their tourist and study visas, as well as information supplied by the various field offices of the Department of Home Affairs, the SAPS and the South African National Defence Force (SANDF). It is now 9 years later, and the numbers have grown significantly, to an estimated 10 million, although there is great uncertainty about the total. In the words of Solomon (1996:1), “the illegal and clandestine nature of this form of population movement provides an inadequate basis for its quantification”.

Many problems are associated with illegal immigration. A study10 established that most such immigrants do not have more than three years of formal education; and that most do not command other work skills than those of subsistence agriculture. The major problems associated with illegal immigration in South Africa include:

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5.4.7.1 Employment problems
Illegal immigrants would be competing with low-skilled South Africans in the job market (Solomon, 1996:4)

5.4.7.2 Depressing effect on wages
A study conducted by the National Labour and Economic Development Institute (NALEDI), and a think-tank for the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) (in Solomon, 1996:1-16), revealed that many workers feel that the presence of illegal foreign workers has a depressing effect on wages as a result of their being willing to work for long hours for low wages as well as their resistance to unionization. This, union officials argue, contributes to local people experiencing decreased access to employment, giving rise to resentment towards illegal immigrants that is consequently expressed in xenophobia.

5.4.7.3 Escalating crime
Between January and November 1995, 152 immigrants were involved in commercial crime to the value of R517 986 870 which, in turn, constituted 19,6 per cent of all commercial crimes over the same period (Pretorius & Pretorius, 1996:71). As a result a recent National Operational Police Policy document views illegal immigrants as “South Africa's Number One Enemy” (Mofomme, 1996:6). The document furthermore notes that illegal immigrants contributed to 14 per cent of all crime committed in South Africa and that these crimes included diamond smuggling, small arms proliferation, narco-trafficking, car-hijacking, taxi violence, burglaries, stock-theft and involvement in political massacres by hiring themselves out as assassins.

5.4.7.4 Overloading of education, health, housing and pension services
As Solomon (1996:6) contends, illegal immigration also contains negative implications for the South African state in its provision of adequate education, health, housing and pensions to its citizens. Regarding the question of education, Minaar and Hough (1996:209) vividly illustrate how busloads of Swazi and Basotho children cross into the country, using South African schools close to the border and thereby placing an inordinate burden on South Africa's already overstretched education resources. De Monteclos (1996:3) further notes that this is not a phenomenon confined to South Africa's
border regions. He observes that in the greater Johannesburg area, 80 000 children of illegal immigrants burden already overcrowded schools.

It is also a disturbing fact that illegal immigrants bring with them diseases with epidemic potential that can be attributed to poverty (Head, 1992:12). The vast majority of these illegal immigrants arrive in poor health and are severely malnourished, and thus offer little resistance to illness and disease. Immigrants are therefore excessively susceptible to diseases such as yellow fever, cholera, tuberculosis and AIDS (Solomon, 1996:10).

The increasing influx of illegal immigrants furthermore contributes to unlawful squatting in South Africa. Most immigrants arrive in South Africa destitute, jobless and homeless. The result is that the vast majority find their way to squatter areas. It is estimated that eighty per cent of illegal immigrants reside in informal housing settlements and squatter camps (Minnaar and Hough, 1996:214).

5.4.7.5 Escalating Government expenditure

The combined cost of all these pressures on the South African fiscus is difficult to estimate. However, Colonel Brian van Niekerk (1995:5), National Co-ordinator of Border Control and Policing in the SAPS, argued that in 1994 illegal immigrants cost South African taxpayers R1 985 million to host. In 1997, it cost South Africa R200 million to deport some 173 000 illegal immigrants to their countries of origin (Parker, 1998:12). This in turn diminishes funds for offering services and welfare to the citizens of the country.

The problems surrounding illegal immigration in South Africa must be seen against the background of global poverty and problems. It is because people are destitute that they come to this country to try to make a living. This constitutes a moral dilemma. At the same time the influx of immigrants overburdens current services, and drains money that could be used to empower citizens. The loss of jobs and depression of wages further contribute to a slide into greater poverty, thus contributing to increased destitution.
6 Conclusion

The problems and issues causing or contributing to destitution are complex, and seem insurmountable. It is clear that destitution results from a complex set of circumstances which force people to choose between food, shelter, and other basic needs. Only a concerted effort by different helpers and role players, to address both internal and external issues contributing to destitution, will make significant inroads towards ending destitution.

In terms of “internal” factors contributing to destitution, we need to realize that, even in our efforts to understand why some people make certain choices, we must eventually come to the place where we respect those choices, even if those choices differ from our own ideas. We must also take into account the various ways in which people will try to protect their dignity, so that we will not trample on emotions that are already sensitive and raw. At the same time, we are a prophetic voice in this world, we must introduce Godly possibilities to “hopeless” people (people without hope), and we must try to facilitate change towards SHALOM. Probably our respect for the choices (destitute) people make, and our desire to see them change, will always remain in tension.

In terms of “external” factors contributing to destitution, among other efforts we need to advocate jobs that pay a living wage, adequate support for those who cannot work, affordable housing, and access to adequate health care, all interventions necessary to empower the destitute.

From the complexities and range of problems that contribute to or cause destitution, it quickly becomes clear that no simple blueprint answer can be found. We need different perspectives, different “angles”. We need to seek holistic solutions that really work!
Chapter 3 – Missions with the Destitute: Theological Perspectives

This chapter comprises five main themes which aim at gaining an understanding of missions “with” the destitute. Of course it would be possible to explore many more theological themes than just the five selected; however, these five provide a good overview of theological reflection and perspectives on missions with the destitute, and as such serve as a starting point for the development of a praxis for missions with the destitute in the following chapters.

1 Introduction

In deciding on the heading for this chapter, the word “missions” instead of mission is used, because, as Cozens (2005:2) puts it (in following Bosch, 1995:9): “We have to distinguish between mission (singular) and missions (plural).” "Mission", the Missio Dei, is what God is doing in Christ to reconcile the world to Himself. "Missions" are what we do to respond to that.

This chapter represents my own difficult and challenging journey of personal growth from a theology of “missions to the destitute” to a theology of “missions with the destitute”. I have discovered that, theologically, there is a world of difference.

Missions “to” the destitute represent an approach where the “haves” give to the “have-nots” (in this case the destitute), where we reach out to them to help them find the God whom we already possess; an approach that focuses on converting them. It is an approach that strives to impart SHALOM to them. It is the wrong one.

Missions “with” the destitute, on the other hand, explore the fact that, in our missiological involvement with the destitute, we are often the ones experiencing conversion. This acknowledges that we often find God already there where we meet the destitute; and we often experience God through their lives, while we were expecting to
impart God (in a one-way fashion) to them. In a sense the destitute help us to find God. And as we grow, to see with unbiased eyes, we start to discover SHALOM together with the destitute, and already present among them. There is SHALOM, being manifested where one destitute person helps another on the streets, where a person with virtually no possessions shares what little s/he has with another. Such acts among others make God visible where we least expect it – and challenge us over and over again with personal conversions to live in a SHALOMATIC fashion.

In my own struggle to grow from “missions to the destitute” to “missions with the destitute”, I was challenged to reflect critically on my personal theology of missions, on the role of the church in relationship with the destitute (and vice versa), and on SHALOM as the perceived goal of missions with the destitute. This reflection also implied researching biblical perspectives on poverty (as these relate to the destitute).

I will now try to encapsulate the interplay of different aspects of missions with the destitute in an illustration, which also provides the framework for this chapter.
The outer perforated oval circle (1) represents God’s Missio Dei. The perforation simply indicates that God and God’s mission cannot be fully understood or limited by our understanding. The perforation also implies that, although God is fully present in our world (inside the inner circle), He also transcends our world.

The area inside the inner circle (2) represents our world and our context. God is at work in our world, in the physical, ethical and temporal (where temporal includes past, present and future) spaces of our lives. We understand this as the specific context in which we live and function. This is the context in which God is actively at work. In a
sense the Missio Dei (the mission of God), becomes a personal, communal and faith
discovery of God already at work in our world and lives.

The two smaller inner circles (3 & 4) represent the engagement between the “public
church” and the destitute. This engagement has a reciprocal effect: it brings about
conversion for both the public church and the destitute.

The overlap between the two circles illustrates the fact that, in the engagement
between the public church and the destitute, we together discover SHALOM.

Stemming from this illustration, five major themes arise for missions with the
destitute, representing different interactive aspects of such missions. In terms of the
outline of this chapter, doing missions with the destitute is the underlying theme featuring
throughout. The five themes building on this underlying theme are to be seen as distinct,
yet very strongly interrelated:
• Missions with the destitute flow from the Missio Dei
• Missions with the destitute are contextual mission
• Missions with the destitute bring about conversion
• Missions with the destitute help us to discover SHALOM
• Missions with the destitute require an active public church.

2 Missions with the destitute flow from the Missio Dei

In terms of missions with the destitute, Meyers (1999:209-210) powerfully illustrates the
Missio Dei at work in the world. He points out that evangelism (the speaking of the
gospel) is often the second act in the story. Using examples from Acts, he explains how
Peter’s speech (Acts 3:3:12-13), and Stephen’s sermon (Acts 6:8) were both cases where
the gospel was proclaimed in response to questions provoked by the activity of God in
the community. That is the Missio Dei at work.
The Missio Dei must represent the starting point of all true mission. Mission is God’s mission: an activity of God Himself, part of the very nature of God (Bosch, 1995:390).

To quote Murray (2001:39): “Mission is not the invention, responsibility, or program of human beings, but flows from the character and purposes of God… mission is defined, directed, energized, and accompanied by God”. Guy (2006:1) emphasizes God’s missionary heart when he remarks:

We recognize that it is God who is on a mission. He who created us and has loved us from the beginning, and has sent His Son to redeem us, continues to pursue us, and to work within us. He is the Good Shepherd, who is tending the flock. The ministry is His ministry”.

The principle is that mission is not a programme of the church but rather an attribute of God. Mission originates first in the heart of God and we are caught up in it rather than initiating it. Mission is primarily the work of God and we participate with God in His work.

Aagaard (1973:13) adds that mission is seen as a movement from God to the world; the church is consequently viewed as an instrument of that mission. In this sense the church therefore becomes a participant in the mission of God (Bosch, 1995:390).

What is this mission? Meyers (1999:42) offers helpful insights in this respect:

From the day our first parents walked out of the garden, estranged from God, each other and the earth itself, God has been at work redeeming the fallen creation, its people, and its social systems. God’s goal is to restore us to our original identity, as children reflecting God’s image, and to our original vocation as productive stewards, living together in just and peaceful relationships.

Bosch (1995:390) considers that to participate in this mission is to participate in the movement of God’s love towards people, since God is a fountain of sending (missionary) love. God sent His Son, Jesus, in an act of love, and He is still sending Jesus, the manifestation of His love, through the church to the world. The church is consequently in service to the Missio Dei, representing God in the world, pointing to
God, holding Jesus up before the eyes of the world. Scherer (1987:84) adds that in its mission the church witnesses to the fullness of God’s promised reign and participates in the ongoing struggle between that reign and the powers of darkness and evil.

The church is not to be perceived as the only instrument of the Missio Dei. As Kramm (1979:210) comments, since God’s concern is for the entire world, this should also be the scope of the Missio Dei. It affects all people in all aspects of their existence. This signifies, according to Bosch (1995:391), that, in its missionary activity, the church encounters humanity and a world in which God’s salvation has already been operative secretly, through the Spirit. Missio Dei then points to the fact that this is God’s ongoing work: He has been about this before we were here. Others have been serving Him before we were involved. In a sense it often feels as if the church is running late and needs to catch up, but in fact we just need to jump in and do what we can right here and right now with those around us: we simply need to participate with all of our heart in the Missio Dei.

The implications are clear: as church we participate in God’s mission, and when we engage others (including the destitute) we discover God’s salvation has already been secretly operative among them, through the work of the Spirit. The context of this salvation is SHALOM, as will be evident later on in this chapter.

In terms of the destitute, the truth of the churches’ participation in God’s mission is manifested as solidarity with the poor, in line with God’s “preferential option for the poor” (Gutierrez, 1996:143-145; Wagers, 1998:2), as it is often described in literature dealing with liberation theology. This matter is addressed in greater detail later on in this chapter (2.5).

The churches’ journey of missions with the poor has travelled through many stages\(^1\), with strong “current” themes emerging as far as missions for our day and age are

\(^1\) The development of the theology of missions as a whole has been extensively researched by Bosch, in his work *Transforming Mission*. 

107
concerned. Bosch (1995:368-507) identifies these themes as “elements of an emerging ecumenical missionary paradigm”. In the footprints of Bosch, many insights can be gained into the emerging themes for mission today as these impact on missions with the destitute: some of these themes are touched upon here, selected for the way in which they directly affect our understanding of missions with the destitute. The final theme addressed here, “Mission as prophetic dialogue”, was developed by Bevans and Scroeder (2005).

2.1 Mission as “Church with others”

In Bosch’s (1995:368-389) view this refers to a shift from mission as the mandate of the church as authorized divine institution to others, towards an understanding that the church must do mission with others as a sign and instrument of the reign of God that is to come. This concept implies recognition of God’s activities in the world outside the church. It requires that the churches’ offices, orders and institutions should be organized in such a way that they serve society, and do not separate the believer from the world.

Gutierrez (1996:236-242) touches on the same idea when he writes about the “church of the poor” and the “church of the people” instead of the “church for the poor”. The basic concept is that we are not the church for the poor or the destitute that reaches out to them in a unidirectional fashion; but that they become part of the church in every sense of the word, an active part of a missionary community; therefore the church becomes church with them.

12 Not all of the emerging themes identified by Bosch are addressed here; only those that impact directly on missions with the destitute. Bosch specifically identifies the following such themes for missions today:

1. Mission as the church with others
2. Mission as Missio Dei
3. Mission as mediating salvation
4. Mission as the quest for justice
5. Mission as evangelism
6. Mission as contextualization
7. Mission as liberation
8. Mission as inculturation
9. Mission as common witness
10. Mission as ministry by the whole people of God
11. Mission as witness to people of other living faiths
12. Mission as theology
13. Mission as action in hope
Once again the implications are clear: no longer can we do missions with the poor in a way that forces them to feel we look down on them, but rather in a fashion that collaborates with them in serving people (including themselves: the destitute). If we approach missions with the destitute in this manner, we should discover God at work in the world outside the church together with the destitute. What an exciting prospect!

2.2 Mission as mediating comprehensive salvation

For Bosch (1995:393) the scope of salvation, however we define salvation, determines the scope of the missionary enterprise. He continues, reflecting that mission in the early church interpreted salvation in comprehensive terms, even though there were different understandings of mission among New Testament authors. He subsequently proposes “comprehensive salvation” as the way forward for missions.

Comprehensive salvation would obviously include a very personal appeal. In this sense Schroeder (2006:3) states that the gospel is both a report (indicative) and an appeal (imperative), a “Good News report” linked to Jesus and an exhortation to appropriate that Good News as one's own. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself.... Therefore, we appeal to you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God" (2006:3). In this regard, it would seem that Paul in the Bible places more emphasis on the (personal) process of salvation; a process that begins in this life when one encounters the living Christ, but will only be completed with the coming triumph of God (Bosch, 1995:394).

Swinton (2000:54) emphasizes the relational aspect of sin as the reason we need salvation. He states that “sin is fundamentally a relational concept”: where sin is defined as the breaking of human – Divine relationships. For Swinton (2000:54), the committing of individual sinful acts must be recognized as a manifestation of humanity’s sinful state, where human sinfulness is not primarily the committing of such acts, but a position, an attitude that the person adopts towards God, and consequently to other human beings. In this sense comprehensive salvation would then also include reconciliation to God.
At the same time salvation must be viewed as the salvation of this world, in this world (Aagaard, 1974:429-431). Salvation in Christ is salvation in the context of human society en route to a whole and healed world (Bosch, 1995:399). In this regard Luke in the Bible employs salvation language in respect of a very wide spectrum of human circumstances: the termination of poverty, discrimination, illness, demon possession, sin etcetera. For Luke, salvation is present salvation that realizes itself in this life today, and that terminates economic, social, political, physical, psychological and spiritual suffering (Bosch, 1995:393).

Salvation is as coherent, broad and deep as the needs and exigencies of human existence (Bosch, 1995:400). Therefore, a comprehensive understanding of salvation must urge us to minister with people in their total need, meaning in terms both of individual need and that of society; soul and body; present and future. In our current world context, one of poverty, marginalization, war, chaos and suffering, to introduce positive change and transformation is to mediate salvation (Bosch, 1995:399-400).

Missions, therefore, imply being involved in the ongoing dialogue between God, who offers His salvation, and the world, which – enmeshed in all kinds of evil – craves that salvation (Gort, 1988:205). Part of a comprehensive understanding of salvation is the realization that salvation does not lie within the grasp of the church to dispense, it is not at our disposal and it is not something we can bring about (Bosch, 1995:397).

In terms of the destitute, we must therefore interpret salvation in a comprehensive way, which does not just mean that we must mediate encounters with the living Christ, but also that we must mediate the termination of suffering as it features in their lives and in the context of our society. We need to discover ways to minister salvation to their total need.

2.3 Mission as the quest for justice

Social justice was always at the heart of the prophetic tradition of the Old Testament (Bosch, 1995:401). The call for social justice is echoed today by the likes of Boff (1987;
1993); Gibellini (1987); Grigg (1992); Gutierrez (1975; 1996) and others. Gutierrez goes as far as to state boldly that injustice is not an accident: it is part of the workings of the capitalist system (1975:117).

However, in terms of the link between evangelism (the commission to announce the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ) and social justice (the call to responsible participation in human society), problems and questions arise. Are they two separate aims of mission, or should we view them as one? Which is more important, which comes first? (Bosch, 1995:401-407)

Plant (2004:3) takes it as axiomatic that evangelism and the quest for justice both constitute essential aspects of Christian mission, because he considers mission to comprise both evangelism and the quest for justice (Plant, 2004:3). It would seem that we should view this as a two sided coin: the mission of the church includes both the proclamation of the Gospel and its demonstration (Bosch, 1995:407), where proclamation would be perceived in terms of evangelism, and demonstration as working for social justice. Boff (1993:131) adds that preaching the cross of Jesus today requires the committing of oneself and all one’s energies to a world where love, peace and a community of brothers and sisters, a world where openness and self-surrender to God, will be less difficult. This represents a call to a world of justice!

In terms of mission with the destitute, this point clearly highlights the need for the proclamation of the gospel as well as for advocating social justice in a society where various forms of injustice lead to destitution.

2.4 Mission as evangelism

Mittelberg (2000:20) observes that there can be little doubt that evangelism should be central to the lives of the church and its people. However, many problematic questions arise when we try to define evangelism, such as: are evangelism and mission synonyms or not? Bosch (1995:411) attempts to answer these questions in averring that he views
mission and evangelism not as synonymous, but as indissolubly linked together and
inextricably interwoven in theology and praxis.

Without entering a full discourse on the nature of evangelism, some valid points
made by Bosch should be emphasized, since they impact on our mission with the
destitute.

Bosch (1995:412) perceives mission to be much wider than evangelism. For him,
mission denotes the total task God has set the church for the salvation of the world, but
always related to a specific context of evil, despair, people and being lost. Evangelism
therefore is the part of mission that engages in the proclamation of what God has done, is
doing and will do, on a personal level, to people (Bosch, 1995:411-414). As Gutierrez
(1988:xxxvii, xli) puts it: evangelism should be perceived in terms of its nature, as
mediating the good news of God’s love in Christ that transforms life, proclaiming, by
word and action that Christ has set us free.

Bosch (1995:413) also makes it clear that evangelism does aim at a response,
since there is a call to “repent, and believe the gospel”. This call is to make specific
changes, because “metanoia” (to repent) does involve the total transformation of our
attitudes and styles of life. As such, evangelism is also an invitation to the world to share
in the hope we as Christians have. Gutierrez (1990:13) adds to this insight when he
defines evangelization as the sharing of the good news that has changed our lives:
evangelization thus becomes the communication and sharing of this joy.

Bosch (1995:413) very strongly asserts that evangelism should never deteriorate
into coaxing, much less into threats: people should turn to God because they are drawn by
God’s love, not because they are driven by fear of hell.

Whereas mission definitely evidences a broader aim and scope than only the
human community, evangelism deals directly with people in a personal fashion (Bosch,
While it may seem that Bosch’s definition of evangelism might be more confined to proclamation leading to a response of sorts, I choose to understand evangelism as a comprehensive action of salvation ministering to people in their total need, that is, in terms of individual need and the need of society; soul and body; present and future. Such a comprehensive understanding of salvation would manifest itself in the action of the church striving towards the termination of economic, social, political, physical, psychological and spiritual suffering. This is sometimes termed “evangelization” as opposed to evangelism, where evangelization ministers a comprehensive salvation that includes evangelism, which would focus more on proclamation (by word and deed) leading to a response.

Hence I concur with David Apple (1994:16): "To spread the kingdom of God is more than simply winning people to Christ. It is also working for the healing of persons, families, and relationships. It is doing deeds of mercy and seeking justice. It is ordering lives and relationships and institutions and communities according to God's authority.”

In doing missions with the destitute, evangelism becomes an indispensable aspect, where we continue to proclaim with word and deed the gospel of hope and salvation to people on a personal level. However, at the same time we are cautioned not to coax or shove, not to judge, but rather to continue witnessing as best we can. We point to Christ in such a way that people are drawn to Christ by God’s love.

2.5 Mission as liberation

It would seem that theologies of liberation, such as South African Black theology, evolved in protest against the inability in Western church and missionary circles to grapple with the problems of systemic injustice. Liberation theology calls for the removal of the root causes of injustice – and it often requires revolution (Bosch, 1995:435).
Gutierrez argues that to know God is to do justice, and is to be in solidarity with the poor (1975:51).

Liberation theology also developed an understanding and perspective of “God’s preferential option for the poor”. These terms were formulated at the Latin Bishops’ conference in Puebla, Mexico (see Bosch, 1995:435). The point here is that the poor are perceived as the first people (though not the only ones) on which God’s attention focuses; therefore the church has no choice but to demonstrate solidarity with the poor. At the same time the poor are no longer viewed as the objects of mission, but as its agents and bearers. This mission is, above all, a mission of liberation (Bosch, 1995:436; Gutierrez, 1996:143-145). Gutierrez (1988:xxi) boldly adds to this notion by defining liberation theology as “an expression of the right of the poor to think out their own faith”.

For Matthey (2002:4), a major contribution towards the understanding of the Missio Dei as experienced in contexts of suffering is the emphasis that in Christ, God has demonstrated an intimate solidarity with suffering people. “In mission, people encounter Christ in the midst of those who suffer, be it from political oppression or economic or ecological disasters”.

Liberation theology strives to liberate and empower the marginalized, where they are in the position of being unable to gain access to the power structures and resources needed to change. This obviously challenges the church. If we truly understand Jesus’ identification with the poor, we will experience a conversion in the way we do theology (Bosch, 1995:437-442). In the words of Gutierrez (1975:50), doing missions by way of a liberating involvement with the poor would “place us in a different universe”. Liberation theology also poses the challenge of a need for mutual conversion, that would also include the rich; a turning from the idols of money, race and self-interest (Kritzinger, 1988:274-297).

Missions with the destitute must by implication be liberating. The latter are marginalized, and often virtually powerless to change their situation. In such a context
we need a theology of liberation that constantly brings about empowerment and transformation in the midst of the destitute and that opposes systemic injustice. In a sense the destitute have become the most marginalized people of the world and they need liberation more than any others.

**2.6 Mission as hope in action**

Hope has always represented an important theme of the Christian faith. Christian hope is built on the experience of God in action in the past, while at the same time yearning for the final future manifestation of the triumph of God. This hope therefore should also alter the way we view suffering in the present – for Christians live as people of hope. It is because God already rules and because we await the public manifestation of His rule that we may, in the here and now, be ambassadors of His kingdom (Bosch, 1995:506-508).

This hope manifests itself primarily in the present; it causes action today: hopeful action, because we are assured of God’s victory and action, through the ages, today, and in the future.

Taylor (2000:126-127) highlights the aspect of choice in regards to this hope. He states that by choosing to believe that the world offers possibilities (in other words choosing for hope), possibilities arise where otherwise they would not have done so. “By regarding the world we know, marked by the chaos of insecurity and the normality and persistence of poverty and injustice, as promising and then acting accordingly, the world becomes filled with (God’s) promise”. We do not reap hope as a reward or as a gift, rather, we create hope by choosing to do so on the basis of what God has done and is still doing today.

The destitute are in desperate need of hope, since most of them no longer have any expectations. However, they do not need a hope that is merely eschatological, that talks about eternal salvation when I die. Rather, they need hope in action today, a hope that God is working in my situation; God wants to be involved with me; there are ways in which my situation can change.
We might think that it would be next to impossible to discover hope while doing missions with the destitute, but we would be surprised: they share many testimonies of God at work in their lives in the past, testimonies that challenge us to conversion and which become the foundation on which present hope is built. Even in hopeless situations, God’s hope in action can be discovered: the destitute demonstrate this truism over and over again.

2.7 Missions as prophetic dialogue

Bevans & Schroeder (2005:348) aver that mission today should first and foremost be characterized as an exercise of dialogue. In other words, the church called into being through this mission must be a community that not only gives of itself in the service of the world and the peoples of the world’s cultures but learns from its involvement and expands its imagination.

Mission, as participation in the mission of God, can only proceed in dialogue, and can only be carried out in humility (Bevans & Schroeder, 2005:348). However, this humility must be bold (Bosch, 1995:489). There needs to be a challenge inherent in or a dialogue, a challenge to conversion, individually on a personal level, but also collectively on a systemic level of social justice and healing. Also, true dialogue presupposes commitment. It does not imply sacrificing one's own position: it would then be superfluous. An "unprejudiced approach" is not merely impossible but would actually subvert dialogue (Bosch, 1995:484).

The prophetic aspect of this dialogue refers to the upholding of hope, present and future hope as manifested by God in our world, a hope discovered together in dialogue with others.

In terms of the destitute, missions as prophetic dialogue challenge us to continuously enter into a dialogue with the destitute, where we together seek to realize the hope of God amidst human suffering.
3 Missions with the destitute as contextual mission

Hesselgrave and Rommen (2000:200) define missiological contextualization as:

…the attempt to communicate the message of the person, works, Word, and will of God in a way that is faithful to God's revelation, especially as put forth in the teaching of Holy Scripture, and that is meaningful to respondents in their respective cultural and existential contexts.

Wan (1999:13) elaborates on this concept by defining “contextualization” in the following words:

…the efforts of formulating, presenting and practicing the Christian faith in such a way that is relevant to the cultural context of the target group in terms of conceptualization, expression and application; yet maintaining theological coherence, biblical integrity and theoretical consistency.

Bevans (2004:26), in reflecting on theology that is contextual, states that such theology realizes that culture, history, contemporary thought forms and so forth are to be considered, along with scripture and tradition, as valid sources for theological expression (Bevans, 2004:4). He advocates the use of the term “contextualization”, and considers this term to include all that is implied in the older terms “indigenization” and “inculturation”. The term “contextualization” includes the aspects of cultural identity, popular religiosity, and social change, where these aspects together enable the development of contextual theology.

Bosch (1995:420) argues that true evangelism should always be contextual. He further makes a distinction between traditional theology that is conducted from above as an elitist enterprise, with its main source being philosophy, and its main interlocutor being the educated non-believer, as opposed to contextual theology, which is conducted from below. Contextual theology has as its main source the social sciences, since these sciences describe and define the context in which theology must be practised. The main interlocutors of contextual theology are seen as the poor or culturally marginalized (Bosch, 1995:423). Bevans (2004:3) also asserts strongly that the contextualizing of theology, “…the attempt to understand Christian faith in terms of a particular context…”
is really a theological imperative. Simply put, it means we must contextualize missions with the destitute.

This requires an emphasis on the priority of praxis: as Gutierrez (1988:xxix) states, theology must be a critical reflection on Christian praxis in the light of the word of God. Contextual theology also places great emphasis on commitment as the first act of theology, specifically commitment to the poor and marginalized (Torres and Fabella, 1978:269).

Hence the theologian can no longer observe and evaluate from a distance: theology can only be conducted credibly if it is done with those that suffer. This places the emphasis on “doing theology” rather than merely knowing or speaking about theology: true contextual theology generates “knowing” (knowledge) through action (Bosch, 1995:425).

This call for hands-on involvement: contextual theology is involved in its context, learns from it, and is formed by it. Contextual theology also reflects constantly; and therefore changes constantly in its praxis.

However, this commitment to action and praxis is not to be viewed as a one-sided matter. As Hardon (2005:4) puts it:

Commonly understood, the focus (of contextual mission) is on adapting the Gospel to the culture which is being evangelized, whereas actually the adaptation is a two-way street. No doubt, and with emphasis, the culture must be respected and its deeply human (and grace-laden) qualities recognized. But having confessed that, we must also look to the other side of the relationship.

In doing missions with the destitute, contextualization becomes very important. We need to meet them on the streets, in the context of their need. We must develop a theology of mission and salvation together with them that will bring about conversion on both sides of the relationship, while manifesting God’s hope and reign in our world. In a very real sense their world must become ours if we truly want to practise contextual
theology. This requires commitment, especially in being involved with the destitute in a “hands-on” fashion.

According to Bevans (2004:5), contextual theology means doing theology in a way that takes into account two things:

Firstly, the faith experience of the past that is recorded in the scriptures and kept alive, preserved, defended, perhaps even neglected or suppressed, in tradition (Bevans, 2004:5). Hall (1993:34-36) comments that a major part of the theological process is simply that of finding out about the Christian theological past. This is recorded in scripture, as well as preserved and defended in tradition (Bevans, 2004:7).

Secondly, contextual theology takes into account the experience of the present, the context (Bevans, 2004:5). This stems from personal or communal experience, culture, social location and social change (Bevans, 2004:7). Taking into account Bevans’ division of contextual theology into two parts, we can begin to unravel the context of the destitute.

3.1 Understanding different ways of doing contextual theology with the destitute

Bevans (2004:141-143) discerns six models of contextual theology that must be taken into account if we want to truly practise such a theology with the destitute. The premise is that there is a time and place for every one of these models, and “certain models can function more adequately within certain sets of circumstances” (Bevans, 2004:139). Also, states Bevans (2004:139), these models are inclusive in nature, meaning that in doing contextual theology, there is no need to commit oneself to one model to the exclusion of all others. However, in terms of the context of the destitute in South Africa, it would seem that the “Praxis Model” (as the model selected in this thesis), might be better employed in a situation that calls for radical change and creative pastoral action.
These models lie on a continuum in terms of their focus and approach (Bevans, 2004:31-32), which can be illustrated as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anthropological Model</th>
<th>Transcendental Model</th>
<th>Praxis Model</th>
<th>Synthetic Model</th>
<th>Translation Model</th>
<th>Countercultural Model</th>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Experience of the present</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td><em>(Focus on...)</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Human experience (personal, communal)</td>
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<td>• Culture (secular, religious)</td>
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<td>• Social location</td>
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<td>• Social change</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Experience of the past</strong></th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td><em>(Focus on...)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Scripture</td>
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<td>• Tradition</td>
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A brief discussion of the Praxis Model should be helpful in understanding the specific approach to doing mission with the destitute advocated in this study. The other models are not discussed, since they fall outside its direct scope.

The said model of contextual theology focuses on the identity of Christians within a context, particularly as that context is understood in terms of social change. In terms of the destitute at this time in South Africa, no other model makes more sense.

Bevans (2004:70) states that the Praxis model is a way of doing theology at its most intense level, the level of reflective action. It also deals with discerning the meaning of and contributing to the course of social change, and so it takes its inspiration not only from classic texts or classic behaviour, but predominantly from present realities and future possibilities.

The model operates with a constant cycle that moves from critical reflection (including an analysis of the context and rereading of scripture and tradition) to action (implying committed and intelligent action or praxis).
3.2 Applying these models towards contextualizing missions with the destitute

In doing missions with the destitute, all of the above models would feature from time to time, yet the Praxis Model is the primary model that I chose to use, simply because it constantly reflects on current realities for the purposes of better action, so that change can be wrought to the fabric of society and social justice. No other model of doing theology addresses the challenges of doing missions with the destitute in such a manner.

One might ask: in what way do the other models feature in doing missions with the destitute?

The anthropological model – with its focus on people and their own understanding of theology – reminds us that we are doing theology with people, where we must have respect for their dignity: to the extent that we are wary of imposing our values and beliefs on them in a forceful way.

The transcendental model – with its focus on a complete change of mind that causes conversion – reminds us that we as helpers need a conversion, a change of mind from “missions to the destitute” to “missions with the destitute”.

The synthetic model – with its attempts to integrate tradition and context — helps us to maintain the integrity of the traditional message (Scripture and church tradition), while acknowledging the importance of taking all of the other aspects of context seriously.

The translation model – with its efforts to translate the gospel into the language of a specific culture – helps us to make sure that we “translate” the same unchanged truths of the gospel into language that speaks to the context of the destitute.
The countercultural model – with its focus on challenging people’s lives and context – reminds us of the inherent challenge that is part of the gospel: when the light of the gospel shines on people and situations, systems and cultures, it reveals a need to change!

### 3.3 Missions in the context of a Biblical understanding of poverty

In terms of the experience of the present, contextualizing missions with the destitute requires an understanding of the South African context (largely dealt with in chapter 2), an understanding of the personal theological and spiritual experiences of the destitute (discussed in Chapter 4), and an understanding of the location of the destitute (also considered in chapter 2).

In terms of the faith experience of the past as recorded in scripture and kept alive, contextualizing missions with the destitute requires a Biblical understanding of poverty, as well as of the way the church responded to poverty in the past. This issue is examined in this chapter, since it fits in directly with theological perspectives on missions with the destitute.

The Bible has much to say about poverty and related issues. It distinguishes between poverty as the result of personal and social factors, while leaning heavily towards an understanding of poverty primarily as the result of social factors. It also mentions voluntary poverty, the choice to live in a certain way for specific purposes.

This distinction between personal and social reasons for poverty confirms the discussion in Chapter two as to why people become destitute and stay destitute, which we termed “internal” and “external” reasons for destitution. However, in terms of a Biblical understanding, greater weight must be given to “external” reasons for poverty; missions with the destitute would consequently focus more on social factors as the primary cause of destitution.
3.3.1 Poverty as the result of moral lassitude
According to Achtemier (1995:804), “poverty, the state of being poor”, is mentioned in two ways by Scripture. In the secondary way, encountered primarily in Proverbs, poverty is the consequence of moral lassitude, especially laziness (Prov. 13:18; 20:13). Means by which people can wilfully make themselves poor are mentioned (Prov. 6:11; Prov. 10:4; Prov. 12:24; Prov. 13:4; Prov. 13:18; Prov. 14:23; Prov. 20:13; Prov. 21:5; Prov. 21:17; Prov. 23:21; Prov. 28:19).

3.3.2 Poverty as the result of social factors
When the Bible speaks about poverty and the poor it does so primarily with an understanding that their situation is understood not as a consequence of personal failings but as a result of social factors, particularly injustice (Prov. 13:23) (Achtemier, 1995:804). This point needs to be highlighted, especially since it reflects so strongly in liberation theology, and since it impacts directly on missions with the destitute.

Achtemier (1995:804-805) adds that this view of the poor (as being poor primarily because of social factors) is revealed in the chief Hebrew terms for the impoverished, which address them as “needy, without power, and abused by those with greater power”. Leviticus defines the poor as those who are lowly because their “power (literally ‘hand’) wavers” (Lev. 25:35) or is insufficient (Lev. 14:21). They do not have the capacity to provide the essentials of life for themselves. Their deficiency in life-supporting power is understood to exist in relation to the rest of the community, represented by the phrase “with you,” repeated twice in Lev. 25:35 (cf. “beside you” in v. 36); that is, their crisis is based in the network of power relationships that constitute society.

Behind such poverty lies economic conflict (Eccles. 4:1). The intensity of the conflict is reflected in the prevalence of slavery (Neh. 7:66-67; Exod. 20:17), since slavery was the lot of the losers in the economic struggle (2 Kings 4:1; Amos 2:6-7; 8:4-6). The condition of the wage earners, vulnerable because they were cut off from a reliable relationship to the land, was as bad (Job 7:1-2) or worse (Deut. 15:16-17).
This clearly mirrors the experience of the destitute today: they are “in slavery” and unable to access the societal network of power relationships.

3.3.3 Voluntary Poverty
Poverty can also be a voluntary choice, in other words, poverty that is truly entered into freely and without compulsion. According to Witham (2007:1), the Biblical witness supports voluntary poverty as a legitimate calling. There are many examples we could consider but three come immediately to mind.

- John the Baptist lived in the desert, wore a poor man’s clothing, and ate foods from the wild. John was universally revered as being a great prophet and Jesus himself testified to the rightness of John’s lifestyle and calling.
- Jesus also embraced a life of voluntary poverty: while the foxes and birds of the air possessed homes the Son of Man had nowhere to lay his head.
- The Apostle Paul knew what abundance was; but he also knew what it was to be cold, hungry and to go without. Paul worked at tent-making when money was in short supply but often went without for the sake of the gospel (Witham, 2007:1).

Douglas et al. (1988:955-956) focus on Jesus as the son of poor parents (Lk. 2:24), but observe that there is no reason to suppose he lived in abject poverty. As the eldest son, he would probably have inherited something from Joseph, and it appears that he used to pay the Temple tax (Mt. 17:24). Some of his disciples were reasonably well-to-do (Mk. 1:20) and he had some fairly wealthy friends (Jn. 12:3). He and the Twelve, however, shared a common purse (Jn. 12:6). They were content to go without the comforts of home life (Lk. 9:58), and yet found occasion for giving to the poor (Jn. 13:29).

Jesus demonstrated voluntary poverty as a way of living for the sake of ministry. In our solidarity with the destitute, the church should rediscover voluntary poverty as a way of life, since we have a Biblically-based imperative responsibility towards the poor.
3.3.4 Biblical perspectives on our responsibility to the poor

The words of Jesus in Luke 4 set the tone for this responsibility: “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour” (Luke 4:18-19; cf. Isa. 61:1-2; Luke 7:22-23).

One may enquire as to which “poor” we are reading about here. Hesselgrave (2003:3), in referring back to Isaiah 61:1-2, explains that the meaning of the Hebrew word for poor (anawim) used here can be interpreted either literally or figuratively. In its more literal meaning it refers to people who are circumstantially poor and needy. In its figurative sense it refers to people whose state of mind and heart is that of humility, meekness and openness. In the context of this study, the emphasis falls on poverty in the literal sense.

Jesus is very clear about our responsibility to the poor and oppressed. Christ's strong warning that eternal condemnation awaits those who do not feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and visit the prisoners (Matt. 25:31-46) shows that the disadvantaged are not merely a peripheral concern of His. In the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus taught that anybody in need is our neighbour (Luke 10:29f.) (Rhodes, 2005:4).

Glover, McCallum, and Swearingen (2003:12) stress the fact that the neglect of the poor is to be regarded as sin, quoting Ezekiel 16:49: “Now this was the sin of your sister Sodom: She and her daughters were arrogant, overfed and unconcerned; they did not help the poor and needy”.

The responsibility of redressing the plight of the poor is fundamental to biblical faith. At its basis is the nature of God as one who hears the cries of the poor (Ps. 12:5). The deliverance from Egypt is presented as the great exemplar of God’s justice to the needy (Ps. 68:5-10; Exod. 2:23-24). As their dilemma is grounded in injustice, their need is for justice (Isa. 10:2). Since their condition is loss of power, the response required is empowerment. A literal rendering of “you shall maintain him” in Lev. 25:35 is: “you shall make them strong.” This demand is extended outside the chosen people, for almost
the same wording is used in condemning Sodom, which did not “make strong the power (hand) of the poor and needy” (Ezek. 16:49) (Achtemier, 1995:805).

In the Law attention is given to social structures that affect the poor. The land is to be left fallow every seventh year “that the poor...may eat” (Exod. 23:11). In this year the landed means of production are to be given over in their entirety to the poor and the debts of the poor are to be cancelled (Deut. 15:2). That the landless poor possess rights in the land is also supported in their claim to immediate sustenance from the fields (Deut. 23:24-25) and in restrictions on reaping and gleaning so that some of the harvest is left to them (Lev. 19:9-10). The law also restricts the processes that oppress people. The empowering in Lev. 25 includes a proscription of interest on loans intended to relieve the distress of the recipient (23:36-37). A collateral (pledge) is prohibited if it were one that would further weaken the debtor (Deut. 24:6) or cause the debtor to suffer (Exod. 22:26) (Achtemier, 1985:805).

Batey, in “Jesus and the Poor” (1972:65), argued that the ideal for the ruler is to be one who fully assumes the responsibility of delivering the poor and crushing their oppressors (Ps. 72:4). It is part of the messianic expectation (Isa. 11:4) seen fulfilled in Jesus (Luke 1:52-53; 4:18-21). The hope for “good news proclaimed to the poor” (Luke 4:18; 7:22) was ancient (Ps. 68:10-11; Isa. 29:18-19; 35:4-6). The beatitude concerning the poor in Luke emphasizes God’s siding with the poor against their afflictors (6:20, 24). In Matt. 5:3 “the poor in spirit” are those who evidence the attitude of dependence upon God associated with poverty (cf. Zeph. 2:3; 3:11-13).

As Rodes (2005:4) shows, in the Old Testament, God gave the theocracy of Israel specific guidelines for taking care of the poor. He commanded that the corners of fields were not to be reaped so that something would be left for the needy to eat (Lev. 19:9-10). This system offered an opportunity for the poor to survive and recover. Milstedt (2004:2-4) terms this the “Gleaner Principle”.13

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13 The Gleaner principle includes:
Gleaning a field is tedious and time-consuming. Those with decent jobs would not be tempted to abuse this privilege. There is no need to ration this privilege to those deemed needy; the needy will select themselves. Having a few pilgrims and vagabonds taking advantage of gleaning rights does not undermine the system. (Jesus and his disciples took advantage of these rights on at least one occasion [Matthew 12:1, Mark 2:23, Luke 6:1].)

There is to be open-handed sharing with the poor. Jesus’ statement that “You always have the poor with you” (Mark 14:7) is a citation of the strong command on giving to the poor in Deut. 15:11 and a reminder of the permanence of this obligation, one also commanded by Jesus (Luke 12:33) (Achtemier, 1995:806).

A major concern of Paul was to take up a collection for the poor (Rom. 15:26) in Jerusalem (2 Cor. 8-9). His purpose was “that there may be equality” (2 Cor. 8:13-15) (Achtemier, 1995:805).

Lastly, one must consider God’s promises of blessings to those who care for the poor. The duty of caring for the poor is frequently and strongly set forth and divine promises are attached to its fulfilment (Psa 41:1; Psa 72:12 ff; Prov.17:5; Prov.22:9; Prov.28:3; Prov.28:17; Isa 58:7; Jer 22:16; Eze 18:17; Dan 4:27; Zec 7:10, etc.; compare Job 29:12; Job 29:16; Job 30:25; Job 31:19; Psa 112:9) (ISBE).

- After a grain field was harvested, anyone could collect the leftovers: the gleanings. Farmers were to harvest only the easily harvested sheaves. The corners were to be left unharvested by the farmer, and anything dropped was to be left on the ground (Leviticus 19:9; 23:22; Deuteronomy 24:19).
- A farmer could make only one pass through a vineyard or olive orchard. Any fruit not yet ripe was to be left for the poor (Leviticus 19:10; Deuteronomy 24:20-22).
- Before the harvest, anyone could walk into a vineyard and pluck grapes for eating on the spot. Bringing in a basket was not allowed, however (Deuteronomy 23:24).
- Prior to the harvest, anyone could walk into a grain field and pluck ears by hand. Using a sickle or other tool was not allowed (Deuteronomy 23:25).
- On Sabbath years (every seventh year), the land was to be left fallow. Volunteer growth was for the benefit of gleaners: no ploughing, planting or harvesting was allowed in those years (Exodus 23:10-12; Leviticus 25:1-12).
These blessings in themselves must arguably not be the reason why we help the poor: we must do so because our love for God drives us to do as He wishes, and there must be unction to live according to God’s heart. Yet these promises do reflect something of the heart of God for the poor, thus according the action of caring for the poor even more importance (Achtemier, 1995:806)\textsuperscript{14}.

In conclusion, it can be asserted that it may be easier to intellectualize concerns for compassion and justice than to practise them (James 2:14). The Christian tradition, however, has taught an urgency in doing God’s will on earth as in heaven. Mark, the earliest Gospel, reflects Jesus’ immediate attention to his role in hastening the reign of God. His preaching and teaching were intertwined with healing and a focus on the poor. Believers did not accept this passively, but actively advocated for themselves and others (e.g. Mark 2:1-12; 7:24-30; 10:46-52), which obviously includes a focus on the poor.

3.3.5 Conclusion
In doing missions with the destitute, both sides of the meaning of the word poverty as it is used in the Bible often come to the fore. If we take the meaning of the word “poverty” in the biblical context as “lacking in material and spiritual goods”, we can also accept the two biblical reasons for this lack, namely:

- Poverty as a result of moral lassitude, especially laziness
- Poverty as a result of social factors, particularly injustice.

Both these reasons for the abject poverty among the destitute can be discerned, and they often overlap. They also present the two sides of an “inside – outside” approach to the causes of destitution, as described in Chapter 2.

\textsuperscript{14} Proverbs 19:17 – “He who has pity on the poor lends to the Lord, and that which he has given He will repay to him.”
Psalm 41: 1-4 (Amplified) – “Blessed, happy, fortunate is he who considers the weak and the poor; the Lord will deliver him in the time of evil and trouble. The Lord will protect him, and keep him alive; he shall be called blessed in the land; and You will not deliver him to the will of his enemies. The Lord will sustain, refresh and strengthen him on his bed of languishing; at his bed You, O Lord, will turn, change and transform in his illness.”
Gal 6: 9-10 – “And let us not lose heart and grow weary and faint in acting nobly and doing right, for in due time and at the appointed season we shall reap, if we do not loosen and relax our courage and faint. So then, as occasion and opportunity open to us, let us do good to all people…”
Of course the specific “blend” of reasons for poverty differs quite substantially from one individual to another; however, biblical perspectives on poverty strengthen the need for an approach that deals with both “external” causes and “internal” causes of destitution (see chapter 2), while focusing more fully on “external” issues as the primary cause of destitution, as manifested in the Scriptures.

The poor are further described as “needy, without power, and abused by those with greater power.” In this sense the poor can therefore be considered “marginalized”, and as such, their crisis is based in the power relationships that constitute society.

From the Biblical context it is also clear that Israel always had its share of the poor. People became impoverished for various reasons. But those most likely to suffer poverty were the fatherless and the widows and the refugees (landless immigrants). These people were often the victims of oppression. This seems to be true of the destitute in particular. They are most often marginalized, without family or family support structures, and lacking resources.

The Bible clearly spells out our responsibility to the poor. Where there is injustice, we must bring justice. Where there is loss of power, we must empower. However, really to make a difference, we need a church that constantly contextualizes its mission with the destitute: a church that strives to understand and engage the challenge of our responsibility to the poor.

4 Missions with the destitute bring about conversion

Conversion basically means “a turning, or returning” to God (Douglas et al. 1988:228).

Gutierrez (1983:95) observes that every spiritual journey starts with conversion: it involves a break with the life lived up to that point. This is also true of missions with the destitute. Our journey of missions with the destitute will bring about change; we change –
meaning we experience conversion. They change, and, one would hope, experience their own conversions. It is an ongoing process, challenging as well as reciprocal in nature.

In doing missions with the destitute, what kind of conversion are we talking about, who must convert, and when can we stop converting, if ever?

4.1 **Conversion must be both personal and corporate**

Traditional understandings of conversion focused initially on personal conversion, and subsequently as something we “take to them and make them experience”. However, this approach completely neglected any understanding of the fact that we also experience conversion when we engage in doing missions with people. It also neglected a respect for people by coercing them to convert, often with “fear of hell” as the main weapon, instead of discovering with them what could be, glimpsing with them images of God’s love, in a way that would draw instead of drive people to God.

As a result conversion today is perceived rather like a two-sided coin: on the one hand it is a very personal concept, on the other it must also include corporate conversion. Both are necessary.

The concept of personal conversion is emphasized strongly in the New Testament, as opposed to corporate conversion in the Old Testament (Douglas et al., 1988:228). Van Reenen (1996:23) explains the personal aspect of conversion in observing that part of missions must include conversion, where conversion is: (1) "turning from self which is in rebellion against God, turning to God through faith in the finished work of Christ on the cross, and coming into union with him through the saving blood of Jesus Christ". Kallenberg (2002:32) expands this understanding when he defines conversion as also including: "the change of one's social identity, the acquisition of a new conceptual language, and the shifting of one's paradigm".

Douglas et al. (1988:228) note that the Old Testament speaks mostly about national conversions: where the community (and sometimes individuals) needed to
(re)turn to God because they had strayed out of His paths. Today, we need conversion on
a social and communal level. This includes conversion of faith communities, but also
conversion in terms of public and social systems, as addressed in Liberation Theology.

Sears (2005:4) touches more fully on the social-communal facet of conversion in
pointing out that the actions of social healing in which the church engages are meant to
transform ourselves, our churches and our society so that we can more effectively carry
out the Gospel: which includes tackling injustice.

De Beer (2003:4) echoes this in the thought, “Hearing the calls to conversion”.
He writes:

As we become present in and with the city, as we face death in all its different
forms, as we analyse power outside us and within, we might hear the Spirit calling
us to new conversions. Just becoming a Public Church in itself requires a
conversion from a privatized faith to a public faith, from a narrow spirituality to a
holistic spirituality, from a commitment to evangelism in a narrow sense to a
commitment to wholeness in every sphere of the city. But we might also be
called to conversion from our own use of power, our own apathy, our own

De Beer adds another dimension to conversion by reflecting on the issue of
personal and corporate conversion in a different manner: he states that conversion would
include experiences of death. He puts this as follows:

As we read and deconstruct the city we will be exposed to death in our midst.
Real physical death caused by violence and crime, AIDS and TB. But also the
death of apathy and loneliness, of xenophobia and other exclusions, of
godforsakeness and ecological disaster. The death caused by the primacy of cars
over people, and roads over parks. The death within our own hearts, because we
have become silent. The death of a church theology that has abandoned the
public spaces to other forces (De Beer, 2003:4)

It would seem that conversion is always personal, yet it must not stop there: the
personal changes we experience must motivate us to influence our society and social
systems to corporate conversion, so that social healing and social justice can become
reality. This could often include death, sometimes painful death, so that something new
can rise from the ashes.
In terms of the destitute, there is a need for personal conversion among the destitute, as well as among the people doing missions with them, but there is also a need for social-communal conversions that would create a society of justice. In such a society the poor would not have to suffer as they do, and destitution would be improbable.

4.2 Conversion should be reciprocal

When we do missions with others, with the destitute, who is supposed to be converted? Obviously we want them to “convert” in the sense that they embrace Jesus as Saviour, yet this is but a part of the bigger picture of conversion. Doing missions with others means that there should always be a move towards the conversion of every party involved. This gives doing missions with the destitute its reciprocal character. If an influence to convert is felt, then it must be felt by all.

Bevans and Schroeder (2005:xv) describe mission as the effort to effect passage over the boundary between faith in Jesus Christ and its absence. They continue:

…in this understanding of mission, the basic function of Christian proclamation, dialogue, witness, service, worship, liberation and nurture are of specific concern. And in that context questions arise, including: ‘How does the transition from one cultural context to another influence the shape and interaction between these dynamic functions, especially in regard to the cultural and religious plurality that comprises the global context of Christian life and mission?’

This influence spells out “conversion”. In doing missions with others (in this case the destitute), interaction (in terms of the facts mentioned above) exerts influence, and this influence brings about change. Such a change is conversion from one way of thinking to another, from one way of doing to another. It represents conversion brought about by the context in which we are doing missions, and by the people with whom we are doing missions. At the same time, in a reciprocal fashion, they experience the same kind of influence, leading to their own unique conversions.

Boff (1999:44) highlights the fact that the church needs to be evangelized by cultures, so that conversion can take place, quoting the Puebla final document (no. 1147)
that recognizes the evangelizing power of the poor in the words: “(the poor) challenge the church constantly, calling it to conversion”.

And even though conversion when doing mission with others can be a challenging and sometimes daunting idea, we ought to openly submit ourselves to “Cross-cultural reality testing” (Hiebert, Shaw & Tienou, 1999:27). Consciously submitting to such testing must bring about conversion. In the words of these writers:

Cross-cultural reality testing forces people to examine both their own and others' understandings of reality. Most people simply assume that the way they look at things is the way things really are, and judge other cultures' views of reality before understanding them. These judgments are based on ethnocentrism, which closes the door to further understanding and communication. Furthermore, ethnocentric judgments keep missionaries from examining their own beliefs and values to determine which of them are based on biblical foundations and which on their cultural beliefs.

Reciprocal conversions will not only empower the destitute towards SHALOM, but will also change the way we do missions with the destitute. As we “convert”, we will do missions differently, we will manifest the Missio Dei in a better way.

4.3 Conversion should be an ongoing process

When has one been converted sufficiently? It would seem that there is no answer to a question like this, because conversion is an ongoing process. Every day we should be converted by experiences of change and transformation (whether for the first time regarding specific issues, or anew), as we grow to reflect the glory of God more and more.

As Gutierrez (1983:95) avers: “…conversion is not something that is done once and for all. It entails a development, even a painful one that is not without uncertainties, doubts, and temptations to turn back on the road that has been travelled…there is a growth in maturity.”

Every time we do missions with the destitute, there should be conversion, as we open ourselves up to learn from them and change together with them. Of course this operates
vice versa. And this is a continual process. It is almost as if we continually arrive at places of conversion together with the destitute, where they change and we change to become what God enables people to be.

5 Missions as discovering SHALOM

In doing missions with the destitute, the focus should very strongly fall on SHALOM as the broad aim of missions with the destitute, one that truly empowers them.

Why not “missions with the destitute bring about SHALOM” or a topic of that nature? Simply because, in doing missions with the destitute, we often discover God already at work bringing about SHALOM; it is literally as if we discover fingerprints of the SHALOM God intended people and His creation to experience everywhere. “The key then is to work harder at recognizing God’s fingerprints in daily life as part of our daily practice of Christian witness” (Meyers, 1999:217) We do not bring SHALOM to the destitute as if it is not there among them; rather, we “unveil” or reveal SHALOM by discovering ways in which SHALOM has manifested, is currently manifesting and should manifest past, present and future, together with the destitute, in our world – all this simply because God is ahead of us, already at work where we are going.

How then should we understand SHALOM? Is it to be seen as an unattainable future dream, especially in the lives of the destitute? Is it a reality that can be realized in people’s lives; if so, in an individual personal way, or in a corporate systemic way? The issue may become rather complex, as discussed below.

5.1 Towards an understanding of SHALOM

SHALOM is a multi-faceted term, with rich meaning. Biblically, it is an Old Testament word, with strong New Testament implications. Theologically, it is a term clearly linked with God’s mission (Missio Dei) and purposes for humanity. In the words of Russell (1974:125): “The mission of God in handing over Jesus Christ demonstrates God’s SHALOMatic purposes to bring liberation and blessing to all humanity”.

134
Westermann (1970:361-375) identified liberation and blessing as two key concepts of salvation which converge in SHALOM. Liberation connotes deliverance from suffering, distress, death, sin, anxiety, pursuit and imprisonment, while blessing refers to the result of the work of God as the Creator and Sustainer of humanity: it is the power of life which creates wholeness and goodness in both creature and creation (Russell, 1974b:107-108). As such, Jesus embodies the meaning of SHALOM through His acts of healing (blessing), as well as His action of crucifixion and resurrection (liberation) (Russell, 1974b:108).

The Hebrew term SHALOM occurs some 250 times in the Hebrew Bible. It basically denotes “peace”. However, the type of peace which is expressed in the concept of SHALOM is far wider than might commonly be assumed.

The understanding of the word “peace” expressed in the Old Testament’s usage of the word contains a specific theological meaning and intention. The root meaning of the word SHALOM is “wholeness, completeness and wellbeing” It does, however, convey several secondary meanings, encompassing health, security, friendship, prosperity, justice, righteousness and salvation, all of which are necessary if wholeness, completeness and wellbeing are to come about (Swinton, 2000:57).

From another perspective, Wilkinson (1980:5) considers that “the meaning of SHALOM is therefore to express opposition to any disturbance in the well being of a person, society or nation”.

SHALOM is found to be a gift which God gives to His creation. As such it is a fundamentally holistic and relational concept (Swinton, 2000:58). Wolterstoff (1978:19-20) stresses this relational aspect:

To experience SHALOM is to flourish in all one’s relationships – with God, with ones fellow human beings, with the non human creation, with oneself. Such flourishing naturally presupposes peace in the usual sense, absence of hostility. But SHALOM goes beyond the absence of hostility, to fulfillment and joy.
Conn and Ortiz (2001:289-290) confirm this understanding and add that the SHALOM of God has to do with being in right relationships with God, our neighbour and our environment. It involves enjoying life with others and ourselves (Is. 11:6-8), a harmonious relationship with God (Is. 2:2-3) and harmonious relationships with nature (Is. 25:6). These relationships create a community of SHALOM, and where they are absent, they destroy SHALOM.

If SHALOM is a relational concept, it is also a concept that implies “right relationship”. Central to the concept of SHALOM in the Hebrew Bible is the concept of “righteousness”. As Wilkinson (1980:6-7) puts it:

…to be righteous in the Old Testament view is to conform to a norm, to be in right relationship. In the case of man, this norm is the character of God, and this relationship is to God and His will. Righteousness is fundamental in the Old Testament concept of health. A right relationship with God produces SHALOM (Isaiah 32:17). Righteousness and SHALOM flourish together.

Right relationship with God enables humanity to experience SHALOM, which encompasses both the wholeness and holiness of human existence, and to live lives that faithfully image God (Swinton, 2000:58).

Freedman (1992:207) discusses how the creation narratives in Genesis inform the reader that the natural state of the created order is harmony and peace: SHALOM. However, although justice, righteousness and peace are all present in their original state, creation in its current state is found to be fragmented, scattered, disunited and without peace.

Jesus played an important role in connection with SHALOM in the Old Testament. For the Old Testament Prophets, the coming Messiah, the “Prince of Peace”, would be the one who would return God’s SHALOM to His people. As Hoekendijk (1967:19) puts it: “…the Messiah is the prince of SHALOM (Isa. 9:6), He will be the SHALOM (Micah 5:5), He shall speak SHALOM to the heathen (Zech. 9:10), He will realize the plans of SHALOM which the Lord has in mind for us to give us a future hope”.

136
In the New Testament, the messianic mission of Jesus is closely linked with the Old Testament’s understanding of God’s Messiah as the bringer of SHALOM. Jesus, understood as the long-awaited Messiah, was seen as the bearer and the sharer of God’s eschatological SHALOM (John 14:27, 16:33).

He is the chosen one whose primary mission is to restore the created order to its natural state, to turn the whole of creation from a state of bedlam to one of SHALOM (Swinton, 2000:59). SHALOM in the New Testament is a person, not some distant utopian ideal. SHALOM is intricately bound up with the nature and person of Jesus, with His work of restoration in its macro- and micro- dimensions (Swinton, 2000:59).

This demonstrates that SHALOM is not something that can be understood outside of its true context in Jesus. It is not a political or ideological possibility. It is not a vision that inspires humanity to try harder. In fact, the empirical reality of the fallen human condition would suggest that it is not even a sociological possibility. SHALOM is a personal gift from a relational God to His fallen creation. It is a re-creative process that has been put into motion by the resurrected Christ. It is through entering into a relationship with Christ that a person is enabled to experience SHALOM, and to begin to participate in the restoration of the imago Dei. It is in God’s redemptive movement towards the world that the whole of creation is being reconciled and guided towards its true state of SHALOM.

5.2 Conclusion

SHALOM, with all the richness of meaning captured in the concept, is the aim towards which we strive in empowering destitute people. Therefore, discovering SHALOM with the destitute implies that we should discover ways in which they can experience “wholeness, completeness and wellbeing”, and in this discovery we will also experience SHALOM, both on a personal, as well as a corporate societal level. It implies that (in finding their SHALOM) our own SHALOM, and the SHALOM of our world, will be enhanced, enriched, enlarged and enjoyed more fully.
To further this aim, a model functioning as a “continuum of empowering care” for the destitute is developed in chapter 5; every part of it is permeated with a drive towards SHALOM. In this sense SHALOM functions as the central aim, as well as the perpetual outcome, of missions with the destitute as captured in the model.

Discovering SHALOM also implies seeking ways in which liberation and blessing for the destitute can be brought about. In this sense it would include liberation from entrenched systems of injustice or society which are trapping people in poverty and destitution. In terms of the “inside-out” and “outside-in” model of approaches to destitution developed in chapter 2, liberation, in the context of SHALOM as its aim, will refer mostly to “outside-in” missions. This concept is developed further in chapter 7. Blessing, in the context of SHALOM as its aim, would refer mostly to “inside-out” missions, which includes discovering ways to personal wholeness, or to become part of a community of care, or to build relationships (Chapter 6).

It is clear that such SHALOM is relational: relational communities are called for, to flesh out SHALOM. The proposal is that the church is intended to be this community, but that it would require a different kind of church: a “public church” that engages the challenges of manifesting and discovering SHALOM together with the destitute. It implies that in doing missions with the destitute community must be emphasized. This is discussed in the final part of this chapter.

True SHALOM cannot be divorced from the person of Jesus since it is through entering into a relationship with Christ that a person is enabled to experience SHALOM, often in spite of negative circumstances. Therefore, inviting people to encounters with the living Christ should form part of missions with the destitute, since such encounters should bring about the discovery of SHALOM. In terms of the Missio Dei, this means that bringing about SHALOM requires an understanding of evangelism as “comprehensive salvation”, as this salvation was defined elsewhere in this chapter.
Even though SHALOM is a comprehensive eschatological concept, it also manifests itself in the micro-personal dimensions of human existence. In this sense SHALOM may be viewed as the integral experience of a person who is functioning as God intended, in consonant relationship with Him, with others and with her or his own self. SHALOM describes the experience of being harmoniously at peace, both within and without (Craig, Ellison and Smith, 1991:36). These authors add that, because of the Fall, human beings are unable to fully experience SHALOM, but to the extent that they are living consonantly with His design for human functions they experience higher degrees of it (1991:36). Simply put, this means that people live a life with a purpose.

Swinton (2000:60) contends that the concept of SHALOM is therefore seen to be both a goal and an holistic process which is initiated and sustained by God as He seeks to deal with the relational alienation of creation through His ongoing movement within history, towards that goal. The model developed in chapter 5 proposes that SHALOM as the goal/aim, as well as a holistic process with specific outcomes in mind, should be purposefully striven towards by means of missions with the destitute. These missions (as actions of participating in the Missio Dei), can be guided loosely by the framework of a model striving towards SHALOM, such as the “continuum of empowering care” model developed in chapter 5.

With regards to the churches’ role in discovering SHALOM with the destitute, it becomes clear that God’s redemptive, eschatological movement towards SHALOM furnishes the context, the motivation and the goal for the church’s mission with the destitute: as the church participates in God’s continued redemptive mission to the world.

6 Missions with the destitute require a “Public Church”

Missions with the destitute pose challenges to the church. It would seem that the church needs to rethink its role and strategy as regards missions, especially such missions, since it would seem that the church has struggled, and often failed, in its task of liberating the destitute.
Viv Grigg (1992:112) criticizes the “failure” of the church in no uncertain terms when he asserts: "The church has given bread to the poor and has kept the bread of life for the middle class".

Robinson (1997:274) also paints a bleak picture of the state of the church today, writing that the processes of secularization and modernization have swept the Christian church away from its original place. The result is that it has become marginalized and irrelevant.

Pipert (1980:4) describes this church as "salt kept in the saltshaker.". The salt must get out of the saltshaker and the lamp must be put on the lamp-stand: "The church carefully locked in inside the confines of the peaceful atmosphere of its own walls will not be able to bring the message of God's liberating grace to the world" (Heyns, 1967:68).

In Herms’s (1994:135) words, it would seem that the church has been relegated to the sphere of the rationally unexplainable and to the border experiences and situations of people's lives. Religion, and thus the Christian faith, was deliberately privatised and pushed out of the public sphere.

Almost in answer to this situation, Bevans and Schroeder (2005:7) reaffirm that the church is “missionary by its very nature”, while for Guder (1998:8) the church is "God's instrument for God's mission". Likewise Webber (2002:112) observes that the image of the church as the “body” of Christ has resulted in a new awareness that the church is the continuation of the presence of Jesus in and to the world. For Bosch (1995:372), the church is “essentially missionary”. That does not mean that the church has missionaries, or that the church has people who are essentially missionary; the church is missionary. If you like, the church, the whole global entity, is a missionary. It is the whole church that is sent into the world to "do mission" (Cozens, 2005:4).

From this it becomes clear that the church still occupies and should occupy a definite place in the mission of God, especially regarding missions with the destitute
against the background of God’s preferential option for the poor. The church needs to rediscover this place.

6.1 The place of the church in God’s mission

As Van Reenen (1996:31) puts it, the church is: (1) "the distinctive people of God called by Him through His mission and set aside for mission"; (2) a unique community in the world created by God through the Spirit as both holy and human; (3) a distinctive community formed by the calling and sending of God and reflecting the redemptive reign of God in Christ; (4) "a community of God on a pilgrimage through life helping each other to continue as Christ’s disciples and encouraging others to join them on the journey to heaven". Add to this an involvement in the public sphere, and we start to grasp an understanding of the nature of the public church.

Margull (1975:354) expresses this point even more strongly: "Only the church/congregation that succeeds to be genuinely present in this changing world, succeeds in being a missionary church." Jones (in Meyer, 1999:37) illustrates the place of the church as the “body of Christ” very well in the following diagram:
This illustration clearly depicts the fact that the church as “body” continues out of the triune God and His action into this world. It then manifests itself as constant action in the context of our world. As Meyers (1999:38) puts it, the church consequently becomes the witness and sign of the mission of the triune God to this world, of the kingdom of God breaking into this world.
Robinson (1997:274-284), in discussing the church as witness to and sign of the kingdom, makes a very strong case for the church’s involvement in the public sphere from passages in Matt. 5, specifically focusing on the images of “salt and light”, the “city on the hill” and a “lamp on a lamp-stand”. He employs these images to emphasize the fact that the church is called into the public sphere. Salt does not exist for itself; Christians do not exist for themselves either (Bruner, 1987:160). God created a people to live not for themselves but for the world (Luz, 1989:251). Like the image of salt, the image of light also emphasizes the point that the church is primarily focused on the world. Two further images, the town on the hill and the lamp on the lampstand, stress precisely this quality of the Christian church. It is its nature to seek the world. Both the images of salt and light emphasize active involvement in the public sphere (Robinson, 1997:279). Such a church must be “rediscovered” if we want to do missions with the destitute.

Bevans & Schroeder (2005:34) identify six constants in the church’s mission through the ages\(^\text{15}\), which they introduce by means of six questions that the church must constantly answer in order to determine how the church would manifest its missionary nature.

These questions provide a starting point towards understanding the kind of church needed to do missions with the destitute. They are:

1. Who is Jesus Christ and what is His meaning? (Christology)
2. What is the nature of the Christian Church? (Ecclesiology)
3. How does the church regard its eschatological future? (Eschatology)
4. What is the nature of the salvation it preaches? (Salvation)
5. How does the church value the human? (Anthropology)

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\(^{15}\text{These six constants are:}\)

1. Christology
2. Ecclesiology
3. Eschatology
4. Salvation
5. Anthropology
6. Culture.
6. What is the value of human culture as the context in which the gospel is preached? (Culture)

How would a church doing missions with the destitute answer these questions? And what would we call such a church? How would it look? The term “public church” seems to apply best to this “emerging church” when speaking of missions with the destitute, for we need a “church of the market plain” that would engage people with the gospel in the public sphere – where we will also find the destitute hiding away. Using the six constants identified by Bevans and Schroeder (2005) as our basis, we can, by way of “prophetic imagination”, dream about the manifestation of the public church in our context, so that we can strive towards such a church.

6.2 Jesus and His meaning in the public church (Christology)
Such a church would recognize the fact that Jesus was a very public figure doing most of His work in public. Such a church would never view Jesus simply as the one sent to die on a cross, as if that were the only, ultimate and final part of His mission. Rather, a church of this kind would view the life and work of Jesus as God’s way of incarnating salvation (Bevans and Schroeder, 2005:63). Jesus becomes the embodiment of God’s love, a love that is to be held up before the eyes of the world in the person and work of Jesus in such a way that it will draw people to God.

Swinton (2000:56) adds that the church must “image” Christ in its life, actions and relationships: the world must experience something of Christ in the life and ministry of the church. “If the church is to participate authentically in Christ’s work of restoring humanity (and creation) to its true state, then it must image Christ in its relationship with God, with one another and with the world” (Swinton, 2000:59).

Jesus is to be recognized as the one whose life, death and resurrection have set us free from slavery, which “keeps us from acting freely and impedes the human growth God had intended” (Gonzales, 1999:40). Swinton (2000:54) observes, “It is Christ who is Himself the image of the living God, the visible representation of God; the one who
reveals the invisible God in tangible form, and whose redemptive mission it is to re-establish right relationship with humanity”.

Jesus showed us a different way of living, a way that should impact on our everyday lives. In a sense this means that Jesus demonstrated the way to be a public church, by acting out His mission in a public way in the public spaces and places of His day.

6.3 The nature of the public church (ecclesiology)

A public church would evidence a strong outward focus, even if there should obviously be a good measure of inward strength inherent in any church. Sears (2005:1-3)\(^{16}\) identifies the characteristics of such an outwardly-focused church as:

1. Churches that perceive the primary problem in the world to be social and systemic, as opposed to purely personal, in nature. Such churches would challenge others, systems and society.
2. Churches that focus outwardly on the needs of the community and or the “world”, and address physical, economic, and spiritual needs.
3. Churches focused on helping others, with an understanding of the world’s brokenness.
4. Churches with a focus on social justice.
5. Churches that take their context seriously and engage it meaningfully.
6. Churches with a prophetic vision of where they should be.
7. Churches with a strong focus on collective action by the whole people of God.

\(^{16}\) Sears also identifies the characteristics of “inwardly strong churches”:

1. Perception: primary problem is personal
2. Focus inwardly on needs of church attendees
3. Needs addressed: spiritual, emotional
4. A focus on getting saved/sanctified ourselves
5. A focus on evangelism
6. Personal growth model: inner-healing
7. A focus on where we are: the real
8. A focus on personal growth
9. Primarily value psychological health in leaders and being in touch with personal brokenness
10. Individual action/egalitarian leadership
11. Less than 1/3 of resources focused outward on needs of others (often less than 10%)
To be a public church in solidarity with the poor and destitute necessitates being a church with a strong outward focus. As a church maintaining such a focus, a number of other aspects of the nature of a public church community will come to the fore.

6.3.1 **A public church reveals SHALOM and comprehensive salvation**

Swinton (2000:59) argues that the church is that community in which the first fruits of restored humanity are in the process of being revealed; a body of forgiven sinners which has been brought into existence to participate in Christ’s restorative actions in the world. This consequently, according to Swinton (2000:59), means that the form of life which the church community manifests in its mission and ministry must reveal something of God’s coming SHALOM. Swinton identifies the church – the body of Christ – as the primary means God wishes to use to implement His SHALOMic evolution, where “evolution” carries the connotation of “a gradual process whereby the whole of creation is gradually being shaped and formed into the image of God” (2000:60). And since SHALOM is so strongly connected to community, as a relational concept, the public church would discover SHALOM by being and becoming a caring community.

In terms of the destitute, comprehensive salvation indicates that missions with them would minister to people in their total need, that is, in terms of individual need and the need of society; soul and body; present and future. In concrete terms, this implies caring for the physical needs of the destitute where they have no shelter, or food, or safety; continuously advocating for social justice in a broken world of social injustice; helping people discover salvation and God; bringing the destitute into a community of care. It literally implies salvation that addresses the total need of the destitute person, towards discovering greater SHALOM in their and other people's lives.

6.3.2 **A public church invites people into a caring community**

For Gutierrez (1975:67-68) proclaiming the gospel is to announce the mystery of filiation and fellowship, of our status as children of God and brothers and sisters of one another. This introduces the issue of community. A public church, in doing missions with others, would discover “brothers and sisters”, maybe newly found, or long lost, but still “others” with whom it can be in community.
This entails that a public church would work towards the healing of its existing community/ies in a fashion that will make them receptive to engaging and receiving the poor and destitute into those communities. It must go even further, for a public church would actively strive to engender and strengthen community between people, to the extent where it would also form “new” communities. This includes the removal of boundaries or conversely erecting bridges over boundaries that make community difficult or impossible. A public church would not just be a church for the middle class or rich: it would literally be a “church of the people”, especially if these people are poor (in solidarity with God’s preferential option for the poor).

This implies strongly that human suffering and problems (such as the experiences of the destitute) should not be privatized or isolated. Rather, the public church should provide a caring community where the bonds of friendship would enable each individual to find the strength to be human and to remain human irrespective of their circumstances. To paraphrase Swinton (2000:101), it also means that suffering is seen as an inevitable part of the human condition, and as such must not be battled against or defeated, but rather be understood and cared for in community.

6.3.3 The public church would be the “church of the poor” with the poor

Sobrino (1985:93) makes a case for an ecclesiology of liberation, where he maintains that the church of the poor is not the church for the poor but a church that must be formed on the basis of the poor and that must find in them the principle of its structure, organization and mission. In other words, the public church would also be the church of the poor – where the poor would be an active part of such communities.

As Wagers (1998:2) writes, God meets people where they live and struggle. The community is unified in struggle and solidarity with the poor and oppressed. Insofar as the church of the poor not only identifies with the poor and oppressed, but also includes their participation and liberation, it becomes a sign and seed of the Reign of God.
A public church’s “congregations” would manifest a diversity of membership, and members will not all be found inside the church walls, but outside as well. As such, the “congregation” of a public church would exhibit no boundaries in terms of culture or even membership, or in terms of rich vs. poor, in the sense that different cultures, viewpoints, wealth etc. would not be allowed to become divisive boundaries. Such a church would also have “non-official” members with a say in the operations of the church. It would strive to give power back to the people in its context, even if they are not members. In doing missions with the destitute, the public church would have to actively strive to do away with the boundaries, of whatever kind, that inhibit the destitute from becoming part of the church as a healing community. The public church must be a church of the people, and in the case of the destitute, it must be a church of the poor people.

In this manner the church consequently becomes a community that ministers: doing missions in its context. There is a movement in missiology today, away from ministry as the responsibility of ordained men, to ministry as the responsibility of the whole people of God (Bosch, 1995:468). A church of the poor for the poor would be a missional church “reproducing communities of authentic disciples, being equipped as missionaries sent by God, to live and proclaim His Kingdom in this world” (Minatrea, 2004:8). This literally means that the destitute, as part of the community of the church, would be equipped as disciples to be missionaries.

6.3.4 A public church respects and engages the context in which it functions

This principle has already been dealt with extensively where it is argued that “missions with the destitute must be contextual mission”. Simply put, a public church will be contextual in its being and action. Hence it would communicate its witness of comprehensive salvation in “publicly visible and publicly intelligible ways” (Fowler, 2002:1).

In terms of the destitute, we meet them on the street, where they are to be found and must communicate in ways that make sense to them: for instance, giving bread to a
hungry person would communicate caring in a much more effective manner than preaching would. In such ways and others the public church would engage the context of the destitute. This issue is addressed in greater detail under the heading “Inside-out missions as outreach and engagement” in Chapter 7.

6.4 The public church’s view of the future (eschatology)
Would the public church focus on the hope that is to come, the final manifestation of the triumph of God? Or would it hold to an eschatology embedded in history?

Bevans and Schroeder (2005:67) discuss an understanding of eschatological fullness “not as the end of historical process and the inauguration of a timeless, spiritual state, but as history’s transformation and fulfilment”. They explain that growth to full humanity and maturity, growth as God’s image into God’s likeness, was part of God’s original plan.

Swinton (2000:55) enriches one’s understanding by explaining the eschatological implications of the Imago Dei as it is manifested in Christ and restored in believers through the power of the Holy Spirit. He suggests that the true likeness of God (the image of God as it manifests itself in people) is to be found not at the beginning of God’s history with humankind, but at its end. Hence, Christ was as a result given also as the image of God by which we may know what God wills and does, what can and will be in present and future.

Consequently the church must adopt a “past” perspective on eschatology that manifests itself in the present: God at work in history gives us hope for today. At the same time there is a future perspective, where we nurture a prophetic imagination of the reality that could be. This hope manifests itself primarily in the present, and it causes action today: hopeful action, because we are assured of God’s victory and action, through the ages, today, and in the future. To use the words of Wuppertal (1989:781):

…this divinely wrought reality (God’s gift of SHALOM) exercises a mighty influence in the present world, although it still waits its final fulfilment. Soteriologically, peace is grounded in God’s work of redemption.
Eschatologically it is a sign of God’s new creation which has already begun. Teleologically it will be fully realized when the work of new creation is complete.

The public church therefore is called to manifest something of the impending peace of God, His SHALOM, which is given to His creation in and through Christ, and which is central to the structure and character of the ministry and mission of the church in all its aspects (Swinton, 2000:57). According to Brueggemann (1976:15), the vision of SHALOM should be the “guiding light” which directs and vitalizes the whole of the church’s ministry.

6.5 Comprehensive salvation in the public church
How would a church of this kind deal with the issue of salvation? It would understand and communicate salvation as comprehensive salvation, in ways that respect human dignity and choice, and it would do so by employing “public language”.

A public church would first of all understand salvation in a very comprehensive manner, where such a salvation constantly strives for greater degrees of SHALOM in people’s lives and in this world. In a nutshell, comprehensive salvation can be captured in the word “SHALOM”, with all the richness of meaning in this concept. This matter was discussed extensively earlier on in this chapter, but some remarks in terms of the ministry of the public church should be helpful.

A public church practising comprehensive salvation would minister to people in their total need, in terms both of individual need and that of society; soul and body; present and future. Such a comprehensive understanding of salvation would manifest itself in the action of the church labouring for the termination of economic, social, political, physical, psychological and spiritual suffering. As Apple (1994:16) points out:

To spread the kingdom of God is more than simply winning people to Christ. It is also working for the healing of persons, families, and relationships. It is doing deeds of mercy and seeking justice. It is ordering lives and relationships and institutions and communities according to God's authority”.

Salvation as a concept practised by the public church must also carry within itself the accountability to participate responsibly in God’s caring actions towards this world,
as Swinton (2000:56) expresses it: “Salvation and redemption is not just a personal experience, it is also a cosmic process which has been initiated in the life and death of Jesus Christ, and is continued in His resurrection work carried out, inter alia by the life and witness of His church”. In other words, we must live personal and communal lives which anticipate the restoration of the Imago Dei in its fullness. Why? Because the public church recognizes that, in the process of redemption, fallen humanity is gradually being conformed to the image of God in Christ.

Wagers (1998:3), reflecting on “political liberation” as part of comprehensive salvation, asserts that the church cannot ignore structures of power wherever and however we "do" theology. Liberation theology offers a view of sin and evil that regards sin as social, historical fact, reflected in the absence of love in human relationships and also in our relationship to God. Sin demands a radical liberation and, in turn, a political liberation. From this perspective, the structures of power that create economic inequality lie at the heart of evil in the world. This is salvation understood in comprehensive terms to include social healing and justice, the kind of salvation the public church would strive for in our world.

Comprehensive salvation also calls the public church continuously to be involved in evangelism, the process where we communicate with word and deed the good news of God’s love in Christ that transforms life, proclaiming, by word and action, that Christ has set us free (Gutierrez, 1988:xxvii, xli.) Evangelism thus also issues an invitation to share in the hope we hold out to the world. Swinton (2000:54) goes one step further than “set us free” when he focuses on salvation as reconciliation with God: a salvation needed because of the breaking of human-divine relationships. The public church therefore carries within its being the message and hope of reconciliation with God – which it communicates in creative ways within its context.

A public church would also, at all times, communicate comprehensive salvation in ways that respect human dignity and choice. Bosch (1995:413) asserts very strongly that evangelism should never deteriorate into coaxing, much less into threats: people
should turn to God because they are drawn by God’s love, not because they are driven by fear of hell. Bevans and Schroeder (2005:348) echo this sentiment:

…just as the Triune God’s missionary presence in creation is never about imposition but always about persuasion and freedom respecting love, mission can no longer proceed in ways that neglect the freedom and dignity of human beings. Nor can a church that is rooted in a God that saves through self emptying think of itself as culturally superior to the people among whom it works.

The public church would respect people’s freedom and dignity, while upholding God’s love as an alternative to what this world has to offer. Cozens (2005:12) voices something of our own struggle sometimes to reconcile our “bold witness” as the church with our respect for the free choice and dignity of people, in stating that we know we are called to respect others and treat others with humility and love as we would wish to be treated ourselves; while we also know that we are called to confess Christ and Him crucified. We do not always know how these two fit together, the challenge and the respect for people’s choices, but it is perhaps not our job to know right now. And actually, that ought to keep us honest.

Lastly, a public church would communicate comprehensive salvation, in non-coercive ways, in public language: that is, in “publicly visible and publicly intelligible ways” (Fowler, 2002:1). This communication implies the need to develop a public language. In the words of De Beer (2003:2):

We should be careful of how we talk of God in the public arena. Jesus said we should be as wise, shrewd even, as the serpents. Bonhoeffer said we need to learn how to speak of our most fundamental values in a religionless way. How to speak what we believe to be in the heart of God, without mentioning God’s name. And that is not to compromise our faith, but to be wise in how the values of the kingdom are transferred into the public arena of the city (De Beer, 2003:2).

6.6 The value of people in the public church (anthropology)

As Blomberg and Wilson (1993:8) aver, the image of God remains in all humans even after the fall – but while it may not be destroyed, it is fundamentally spoiled, disorientated and in need of restoration. Consequently the public church would recognize the fact that the image of God is present in all human beings, regardless of their state or
fallen condition, whether in a spiritual or physical sense, and would actively journey with people to restore the image of God in them. The public church would do missions with people in a way that empowers them to become what God intended them to be; to realize their God-given potential, because a public church would see something of the (broken) image of God in all people, especially the destitute.

Such a church would journey with people to (re)-empower them to become the image of God. This is a powerful statement that calls for some reflection. In this respect Swinton (2000:54) states that humanity’s sinful condition includes, on a personal individual as well as corporate relational level, the failure to faithfully live out the image of God which is the heritage and destiny of all human beings. Guy (2006:1) adds that the church must recognize that each person is created in the image of God, and thus possess the inherent dignity and value that accompanies it. He stresses the fact that God has been, and continues to be, at work within people, leading them on a unique and sacred journey.

6.7 The value of culture in the public church

When referring to culture, we are talking about the “human context”. As Bevans & Schroeder (2005:47) put it: “The gospel never encounters people in a vacuum. Human beings are meaning-making animals and work out and express that meaning through human culture” (2005:47). Schreiter (1997:144) defines “culture” as a multi-dimensional concept that includes beliefs, values, codes of conduct, rituals as an expression of that culture’s worldview, as well as “material” things such as food, language, clothing, music and so on. As such, culture constitutes the “human” part of context.

A public church would first of all respect the culture of the people it engages, whether they are official members or not. It would expect to encounter the divine in potentially different ways in that culture. It would strive to understand that culture and engage it in meaningful ways. It would try to flesh out the gospel in a “culture-friendly” way, one that makes the gospel easier to accept in that culture. At the same time it would work towards the healing of culture as the need for such healing is perceived. Even with the destitute, a challenging “culture” that cannot be clearly defined in terms of normal
aspects of culture, the public church would try to understand that fragmented culture and engage it in meaningful ways.

7 Conclusion

In terms of missions with the destitute, a number of aspects stand out.

Firstly, it is not our mission per se; we (as the church engaging the destitute) are participating in God’s mission (Missio Dei). Missions with the destitute as part of the Missio Dei must be liberating with regard to the destitute, in accordance with God’s preferential option for the poor. Our missions must mediate a comprehensive salvation that includes evangelism, while at the same time pursuing the quest for social justice. As such our missions with the destitute must generate hope, not reactively, but creatively. Missions with the destitute require continued dialogue with all the parties involved, to resourcefully generate a prophetic hope.

Secondly, missions with the destitute must be contextualized over and over again. This implies continued contextualization, as we reflect on and adapt our missions, approaches and engagement with the destitute.

Thirdly, this will inevitably lead to conversion/s, where all the parties involved should experience a motivation to change, and change again, in a process of growth as far as understanding and doing differently are concerned.

In the fourth place, missions with the destitute will discover SHALOM as the all-inclusive liberation and blessing intended by God for people and humanity; understanding that SHALOM is very strongly relational, so that only “in community” can SHALOM truly be experienced in its fullness.

And, lastly, missions with the destitute will call for a public church. Such a church would be active in the public sphere, on the market plain, in the streets – any place where we will find the destitute. It would engage people in culturally sensitive
ways, using public language. It would value community, and would work for community, including community with the destitute. As such, it would transcend its own boundaries and endeavour to dismantle boundaries that inhibit community with the destitute. It would treat people with dignity and respect. It would reveal and uphold SHALOM as its aim and as God’s purpose with people. It would also empower the “whole people of God” to be involved in its missions.

Theologically, these perspectives must lead to renewed practice. How can the church empower destitute people and in so doing transform its own community, and the community in its broader sense? This question is explored in the following chapters.
Chapter 4 – Towards Understanding

Destitute People

Who are the destitute? What do they experience? What is their outlook on life? Do they entertain “hope” of any kind regarding the future? What about belonging and other needs? What do destitute people feel about God? How we answer these questions, and how we perceive destitute people will obviously play a role in the way we do missions with the destitute. I propose that we try to see the destitute as God sees them, as individual people with dignity, needs, strengths and feelings. While this may sound obvious, it often seems as if we are so focused on the task of “correcting” or “fixing” destitute people that we tend to forget the people themselves. Only through the effort of trying to understand, an effort of solidarity with the destitute, can we start to flesh out missions with them.

1 Introduction

In chapter 3 the notion of missions with the destitute was explored. Part of this exploration included contextualizing such missions. Following Bevans and Schroeder (2005), contextualization was discussed as a concept taking into account both the faith experience of the past (recorded in scripture and kept alive in tradition) and the present context (personal and communal experience, social location). This chapter focuses on the second part of the dichotomy of contextualization, namely the personal and communal experiences of the destitute. Added to this is the social location of the destitute, which, in this case, refers to the socio-economic context of South Africa (considered in Chapter 2). Only if we grow in understanding of the personal and communal experiences of the destitute, can we really do missions with them as God intended.

Peter Marin ((in Grigg, 1992: 97), has written powerfully about the ways in which “our supposed sources of support….have caused the problem in the first place.” He explains the refusal of many people to accept the offer of help as “a mute, furious refusal, a self-imposed exile” that reflects our inability to provide any relief to the sense of
isolation of so many of our fellow citizens. Instead of gratefully accepting our offers of help and shelter, “they are clinging to their freedom and their space, and they do not believe that this is what we, with our inadequate and grudging programs and shelters, mean to allow them”. We need a better understanding of the destitute if we are to bridge problems like those stated above.

Often a helper’s current understanding of destitute people is simply lacking. The destitute are often targeted as an “object group”, with the assumption that all destitute people are basically the same. In the process we forget that destitute people are individuals, people representing the full range of individual variety, people experiencing different reasons for becoming or being destitute, people reacting differently to these experiences. Probably we should go back to the start and redefine missions with the destitute by realizing that the destitute are individual people, people experiencing God (in their own way), people trying to protect their own fragile dignity, people living with their own feelings and problems in the midst of their situations.

2 The destitute are people…

This sounds obvious, but it is not. Who are the destitute, for me, as I try to journey with them? My personal journey with the “affluent church” convinced me that non-destitute people see the destitute as people without faces. Added to this, the destitute tend to be stigmatized as lazy, or stupid, or “bad”. The affluent church also tends to view the destitute as a good “project” where we can help as we wish, while consciences are soothed. Missions with the destitute in the affluent church are mostly seen as something we do to them or for them, never with them. The destitute then become a convenient target for our noble welfare efforts, while we still perceive them as stigmatized faceless people.

Wagers (1998: 1) writes:

The presence of destitute people in the midst of tremendous affluence points not only to an economic crisis, but also a spiritual crisis. In a society obsessed with wealth, power, and the imperative of success, homeless people are stigmatized as personifying moral degeneracy, powerlessness and abject failure. From the
vantage point of liberation theology, however, if one takes the "preferential option for the poor" seriously, the most destitute in our midst become the agents of transformation in "God's Today.

In this way the destitute are often treated as “objects” with which we work towards our goals. Some of those goals are very noble, but this approach contains fundamental problems. When we start to view the destitute as people, individuals in their own right, we are suddenly faced with a different approach. Suddenly they become people with their own ideas, and those ideas become important. Suddenly the question is not about our goals anymore, but about theirs, about what they want to do with their lives. Suddenly they become people with a say, people we should listen to. And, shockingly, they become the people that God uses to change us, to convert us – but only if we start treating them as people. While they remain objects only, we can safely keep them at a distance, where they cannot come into our world of comfort.

Doing missions with the destitute as individual people requires a conscious effort to listen to them and try to understand: in this way we can gain an understanding of the SHALOM they dream about, so that we can journey with them towards their goals.

3 The destitute are people experiencing destitution

What does it mean to experience destitution? This process begins with the basic definition given in the first chapter – “People who are lacking the basic means of human existence, and are therefore wanting, because they are extremely poor… in addition, the condition of being ‘destitute’ causes a whole range of personal and social problems, from a breakdown in self-image, to the inability to break out of the vicious circle of poverty.”

Yet somehow this seems too vague; what are destitute people really experiencing? In an article posted on the Web in 2003, the perspectives of a person trapped in chronic poverty are voiced. It helps us to understand what poor people really experience. It is also sobering to think that the destitute are even worse off, since they represent the poorest of the poor.
Being Poor

Being poor is knowing exactly how much everything costs.
Being poor is getting angry at your kids for asking for all the crap they see on TV.
Being poor is having to keep buying cheap cars because they're what you can afford, and then having the cars break down on you.
Being poor is hoping the toothache goes away.
Being poor is knowing your kid goes to friends' houses but never has friends over to yours.
Being poor is living next to the freeway.
Being poor is coming back to the car with your children in the back seat, clutching that box of Raisin Bran you just bought and trying to think of a way to make the kids understand that the box has to last.
Being poor is wondering if your well-off sibling is lying when he says he doesn't mind when you ask for help.
Being poor is a heater in only one room of the house.
Being poor is hoping your kids don't have a growth spurt.
Being poor is stealing meat from the store, frying it up before your mom gets home and then telling her she doesn't have to make dinner tonight because you're not hungry anyway.
Being poor is Goodwill underwear.
Being poor is not enough space for everyone who lives with you.
Being poor is feeling the glued soles tear off your supermarket shoes when you run around the playground.
Being poor is relying on people who don't give a damn about you.
Being poor is finding the letter your mom wrote to your dad, begging him for the child support.
Being poor is a bathtub you have to empty into the toilet.
Being poor is making lunch for your kid when a cockroach skitters over the bread, and you looking over to see if your kid saw.

17 http://www.scalzi.com/whatever/003704.html
Being poor is people angry at you just for walking around in the mall.
Being poor is not taking the job because you can't find someone you trust to watch your kids.
Being poor is the police busting into the apartment right next to yours.
Being poor is not talking to that girl because she'll probably just laugh at your clothes.
Being poor is hoping you'll be invited for dinner.
Being poor is a sidewalk with lots of brown glass on it.
Being poor is people thinking they know something about you by the way you talk.
Being poor is your kid's teacher assuming you don't have any books in your home.
Being poor is ten rands short on the utility bill and no way to close the gap.
Being poor is knowing you work as hard as anyone, anywhere.
Being poor is people surprised to discover you're not actually stupid.
Being poor is people surprised to discover you're not actually lazy.
Being poor is a six-hour wait in an emergency room with a sick child asleep on your lap.
Being poor is never buying anything someone else hasn't bought first.
Being poor is having to live with choices you didn't know you made when you were 14 years old.
Being poor is getting tired of people wanting you to be grateful.
Being poor is knowing you're being judged.
Being poor is checking the coin return slot of every soda machine you go by.
Being poor is deciding that it's all right to base a relationship on shelter.
Being poor is feeling helpless when your child makes the same mistakes you did, and won't listen to you beg them against doing so.
Being poor is a cough that doesn't go away.
Being poor is making sure you don't spill on the couch, just in case you have to give it back before the lease is up.
Being poor is a lumpy futon bed.
Being poor is knowing where the shelter is.
Being poor is people who have never been poor wondering why you choose to be so.
Being poor is knowing how hard it is to stop being poor.
Being poor is seeing how few options you have.
Being poor is running in place.
Being poor is people wondering why you didn't leave.

Posted by John on September 3, 2005 12:14 AM

Destitution most often also means entrapment in the poverty cycle (described in chapter 2). According to Wikipedia, in economics and sociology, the cycle of poverty or the poverty cycle is a social phenomenon in which poverty-stricken individuals exhibit a tendency to remain poor throughout their lifespan and in many cases across generations. The Hutchinson Encyclopedia (2007:1) adds that the poverty cycle often requires external intervention if it is to be broken:

The poverty cycle represents a set of factors or events by which poverty, once started, is likely to continue unless there is outside intervention. Once an area or a person has become poor, this tends to lead to other disadvantages, which may in turn result in further poverty.

The cycle of poverty has been described as a “catch-22 and a feedback loop”, since it occurs because the resources necessary to climb out of poverty, such as financial capital, education, or connections, are not available to the poor.

Possibly the best effort to understand the experiences of poor people is available in a participatory research study conducted by the World Bank between 2000 and 2001. In this study Narayan et al. (2000) collected the voices of more than 60,000 poor men and women from around the world in an unprecedented effort to understand poverty from the perspective of the poor themselves. It chronicles the struggles and aspirations of poor people for a life of dignity. The study reveals in particular that poverty is multidimensional and complex.

In sharing their lives, hopes and needs, poor men and women highlight hunger and other material deprivations but also speak forcefully of social, physical and psychological dimensions and of lacking freedom of choice and action. According to a poor woman from Latvia, “Poverty is humiliation, the sense of being dependent, and of
being forced to accept rudeness, insults and indifference when we seek help.” Poverty is voicelessness and powerlessness. It is insecurity and anxiety.

The many disadvantages that poor people endure cluster around ten dimensions. What especially emerges from the Voices of the Poor study is that these dimensions are not only multiple, but that they are often tightly interlocked, making it difficult for poor people to better their lives.

### 3.1 Dimensions of powerlessness and ill-being (as opposed to SHALOM/Wellbeing)

According to Narayan et al. (2000:249), the ten dimensions of powerlessness and ill-being, and their interconnectedness, can be illustrated as follows:

![Diagram of the ten dimensions of powerlessness and ill-being](image)

Narayan et al. (2000: 249) proceed to describe the nature of the powerlessness and ill-being in every one of these ten dimensions:
### Dimension | Nature of powerlessness and ill-being
--- | ---
1. Livelihood and assets | Precarious, seasonal, inadequate
2. Places | Isolated, risky, unserviced, stigmatized
3. The Body | Hungry, exhausted, sick, poor appearance
4. Gender Relations | Troubled and unequal
5. Social Relations | Discriminating and isolating
6. Security | Lack of protection and peace of mind
7. Behaviours | Disregard and abuse by the more powerful
8. Institutions | Disempowering and exclusion
9. Organizations of the Poor | Weak and disconnected
10. Capabilities | Lack of information, education, skills, confidence

#### 3.1.1 Livelihoods and assets: precarious, seasonal, and inadequate
Poor women and men survive through a patchwork of low-paying, temporary, seasonal, often backbreaking, dangerous and sometimes illegal work. According to a discussion group participant from Morro da Conceição, “If you earn a minimal wage or so and pay 110 reais for rent, what will you live on? You’ll live on odd jobs in order to eat.”

Precariousness is compounded by limited ownership of and access to assets: physical, financial, human, environmental, and social. A large majority in the study perceive economic opportunity as distant from them. “Everyday there are more unemployed, everyday one sees more men around the neighborhood all day long,” said a study participant from Moreno, Argentina. In Malawi, poor men cried, “the problem is that these boat owners know we are starving. As such we would accept any little wages they would offer to us because they know we are very desperate…we want to save our children from dying.”
3.1.2 Places of the poor: isolated, risky, unserviced and stigmatized
Not only do poor people live in geographically isolated areas—remote rural sites or urban slums poorly served by basic infrastructure and transportation—but they also live in areas that can be physically dangerous, unhealthy and unsanitary, or prone to natural disasters. “Look at our river!” exclaims a poor middle-aged man from Bulgaria, “The cows stop milking when they drink this water.” Many poor communities sit on hillsides, flood plains, arid lands or polluted areas. Poor people often report that they have to pay more than better-off neighbourhoods for the few services they do receive.

3.1.3 The body: hungry, exhausted, sick and in poor appearance
The poorer people are, the more probably their livelihoods depend on physically demanding work: often involving long hours, dangerous conditions and meagre returns. Those who are hungry, weak and look bad are frequently paid less and less reliably. A poor people’s principal asset is often his or her body, but it can flip instantly to a devastating liability with illness or injury. As a poor woman from Zawyet Sultan, Egypt, explains: “We face a calamity when my husband gets ill. Our life comes to a halt until he recovers and goes back to work.”

Poor people in very many communities report difficulties accessing medical care due to corruption regarding fees and preferential treatment for those with influence and money. In addition, people speak frequently about being asked to wait a long time, being treated with rudeness and indifference by medical staff, and lack of access to quality services and treatments in general. This statement from a discussion group participant in Vares, Bosnia and Herzegovina could speak for many in the study: “Before everyone could get health care, but now everyone just prays to God that they don’t get sick because everywhere they ask for money.”

3.1.4 Gender relations: troubled and unequal
The exclusion of poor women from social, political and economic life is still widespread despite the fact that poor women, more than ever, are earning incomes. Violation of deeply entrenched gender roles of men as “breadwinners” and women as “caretakers” has
created turmoil in households. Men express anger and humiliation over being unable to maintain their role as the household’s main or sole breadwinner.

Many poor men and women shared about their struggles with verbal and psychological abuse in the home, and report this to be a more serious problem than in the past. Much of this is linked to deepening economic pressures and changing gender roles but also to alcohol and drug addiction, gambling, polygamy and promiscuity. Overall, the discussion groups from 90 percent of the communities where violence was discussed acknowledge the presence of domestic violence against women in their villages and neighbourhoods.

3.1.5 Social relations: discriminating and isolating
Social relations include the experience of being left out, looked down upon, pushed aside, and ignored by those more powerful at all levels. This affects poor people’s access to resources and opportunities and their ability to influence decisions that shape their lives. Poor people often face negative behaviour and discrimination based on ethnicity, gender, caste, material poverty, age, religion, and physical location. Social isolation and economic stress fracture some communities, while in others, poor people organize themselves to take defensive action.

3.1.6 Security: lack of protection and of peace of mind
Many poor people feel that they are more insecure and vulnerable today than 10 years ago. These insecurities have many causes, and feelings of being unprotected and of the greater unpredictability of life make people anxious and fearful. “As if land shortage is not bad enough we live a life of tension worrying about the rain: will it rain or not? There is nothing that we say: ‘this is for tomorrow,’ we live hour to hour,” says a poor woman of Kajima, Ethiopia. Poor people lack the following: connections to those with power and information; the ability to bargain for fair treatment, fair wages or access to capital; and protection by police and the law. Increased hardship has strained traditional social support systems, adding further to insecurity in their lives. Widowhood invariably brings on destitution and social and physical vulnerability.
3.1.7 Behaviours: disregard and abuse by those more powerful
Poor people often experience those who possess more power over them as abusive, rude and uncaring. This includes those upon whom they depend for livelihoods and for services. Being forced to submit to such behaviour compounds their lack of self-worth and sense of powerlessness.

3.1.8 Institutions: disempowering and excluding
From the perspective of poor people, there is a crisis in the behaviour and governance of many public, private and civic institutions that are important in their daily lives. Their contact with those with greater wealth and power—including traders, land owners, employers, the elite, officials, and service providers—is often a source of pain and indignity. A particularly striking finding is the widespread reports of corrupt, criminal and sometimes brutal behaviour by the police. But poor people call for institutions that are responsive, accessible, participatory, fair, caring, trusting, uniting, and truthful.

3.1.9 Organizations of the poor: weak and disconnected.
Poor women and men participate in and rely heavily on a range of informal and formal local networks and organizations, although by and large these groups are limited in number, resources, and leverage. Such groups and networks rarely connect with similar groups across communities or with resources of the state or other agencies. Isolated and disconnected, their organizations remain as assets aiding survival but experience difficulties leveraging their bargaining power with institutions of the state, market, and civil society.

3.1.10 Capabilities: lack of information, education, skills and confidence
Poor people are often isolated from information about jobs, economic opportunities, and credit services, as well as from information on government services and their own rights as citizens. Inadequate education, limited skills, and impaired self-confidence compound their helplessness and powerlessness when faced with wrongdoing and exploitation.
3.2 The challenge of powerlessness to missions with the destitute

Poor people are caught in a web of multiple and interlocking deprivations. Together these combine, so that often even when asked to “participate” and express their opinions or report on wrongdoing, they remain silent. Despite the imbalance in power and being overtaken by shocks and mishaps, many poor people retain their hope and grit to persist. Many emerge out of destitution to reach out and help others. What is remarkable is the resilience that so many show and the way in which they battle against the odds to gain a better life for themselves and their children. A young widow speaks for herself and many others when she says, “Even in times of acute crises, I held my nerves and did not give in to circumstances. My God has always stood with me.”

The challenge when doing missions with the destitute is to build upon poor people’s initiatives, hard work, and resilience in the face of the seemingly insurmountable problems of accessing market opportunities, government services and civil society resources. The challenge for policy and practice is to empower the powerless in their struggles to find a place of dignity and respect in society; to enable poor men and women to enhance their capabilities and claim their rights; to increase their access to opportunities and resources; to enable them to take more control of their lives and to gain for themselves more of what they need.

Given the web of powerlessness and voicelessness, the questions change:

- How can development policies increase the access of poor men and women to opportunities and resources and their freedom of choice and action?
- How can poor women and men’s own efforts and organizations be supported?
- How can networks and federations of poor people’s organizations (women and men) be heard and represented in decision-making that affects their lives at the local, national and global levels?
4 The destitute are people experiencing needs

The destitute are people, like all of us, and as people, they experience needs which often “crave” fulfilment. Often these needs can be suppressed, yet they are still there. What do we make of these needs, how should we approach the needs of destitute people when doing missions with the destitute?

The danger is that, in focusing on the needs of destitute people, we may once again arrive at the point where we try to “fix the problem” for them. This is not undertaking missions with the destitute, and will not empower them. Rather, it would force our agenda (however good it may be) onto them, it may create dependency, it could stigmatize people as “the people with the problem that need help from the people who are ok”.

Therefore, while we are called to understand and take note of the needs of destitute people, we are also invited to go beyond this and do missions with them in ways that empower them. Such an approach can be called “strength-based”. Saleebey (2000:5) remarks that such an approach would require us to notice, acknowledge and respond to needs. “Yet, it requires us at the same moment to begin looking for and talking about strengths and capacities. It brings balance to thought patterns and interactions that have previously been only about what is wrong.” For the moment, however, let us focus on needs.

Regarding the needs of destitute people, two statements often seem to be true. Maslow (1954: 45) pointed out: “When we have unmet emotional needs, we often seek physical substitutes. For example, if we need emotional intimacy and acceptance, we may seek sex, alcohol or drugs.” The second statement is made by Kraybill (2005:38): “People always use their best problem-solving strategies to get their needs met, even if these strategies are dysfunctional”.

168
Offhand we can easily compile a list of the needs of destitute people. Robertson & Greenblatt (1992:4-5), among others, have done just that. They list the needs of destitute people as:

1. The need for temporary shelter (so as not to suffer the physical effects of exposure)
2. Food and nutrition
3. Clothing
4. Protection from sexual victimization (especially among destitute women)
5. Protection against legal abuse, including police harassment
6. Financial assistance
7. Health and medical services
8. Help with addiction problems
9. Help with low self-esteem and self-confidence
10. A supportive social network
11. Day activities and programmes
12. Leisure and recreational opportunities
13. Job training
14. Employment
15. Permanent housing
16. A valued and personally meaningful social role.

While such a list is helpful, it would seem that a mere list is inadequate. There is much more to the needs of destitute people than can be listed. Therefore a brief foray into the theory behind human needs and motivation should be helpful. The theory behind human needs has become quite complex and diffuse, yet an understanding of it is essential for missions with the destitute.

4.1 Maslow and beyond: ideas about human motivation and needs

Maslow (1954) attempted to synthesize a large body of research related to human motivation. Prior to him, researchers generally focused separately on such factors as
biology, achievement, or power to explain what energizes, directs, and sustains human behaviour. He posited a hierarchy of human needs based on two groupings: deficiency needs and growth needs. Within the deficiency needs, each lower need must be met before moving to the next higher level. Once each of these needs has been satisfied, if at some future time a deficiency is detected, the individual will act to remove the deficiency. The first four levels are:
1) Physiological: hunger, thirst, bodily comforts, etc.
2) Safety/security: out of danger
3) Belongingness and Love: affiliate with others, be accepted; and
4) Esteem: to achieve, be competent, gain approval and recognition.

According to Maslow (1954), an individual is ready to act upon the growth needs if, and only if, the deficiency needs are met. Maslow's initial conceptualization included only one growth need, namely self-actualization. Self-actualized people are characterized by: 1) being problem-focused; 2) incorporating an ongoing freshness of appreciation of life; 3) a concern about personal growth; and 4) the ability to enjoy peak experiences. Maslow later refined the growth need of self-actualization, specifically naming two lower-level growth needs prior to the general level of self-actualization (Maslow & Lowery, 1998) and one beyond that level (Maslow, 1971). They are:
5) Cognitive: to know, to understand, and explore;
6) Aesthetic: symmetry, order, and beauty;
7) Self-actualization: to find self-fulfilment and realize one's potential; and
8) Self-transcendence: to connect to something beyond the ego or to help others find self-fulfilment and realize their potential.
Maslow's basic position is that as one becomes more self-actualized and self-transcendent, one becomes wiser (develops wisdom) and automatically knows what to do in a wide variety of situations. Daniels (2001:33) suggests that Maslow's ultimate conclusion that the highest levels of self-actualization are transcendent in their nature may be one of his most important contributions to the study of human behaviour and motivation.

A table that summarizes Maslow’s theory helps with the bigger picture:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Deficiency needs (survival needs)</th>
<th>Growth needs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Every lower level of needs must be met if a person is to move on to the next level of needs.</td>
<td>• People are only ready to start growing when all four of their survival needs have been met.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• When all four levels of survival needs are met, and someone</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Growth then takes place along four consecutive levels, namely:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
experiences a new lack (or survival need), s/he will act to fulfill those needs.

- “Survival needs” are:
  1. Physiological needs – Food, shelter and clothing
  2. Security
  3. Belongingness and Love needs – meaning a need for “community” and acceptance
  4. Esteem needs – meaning appreciation

Maslow published the first conceptualization of his theory over 50 years ago (Maslow, 1943). An interesting phenomenon related to Maslow's work is that in spite of a lack of evidence to support his hierarchy, it enjoys wide acceptance (Wahba & Bridgewell, 1976; Soper, Milford & Rosenthal, 1995). Despite the fact that the hierarchy of needs model was not based on any research, it has become one of the most popular and often cited theories of human motivation. Maslow’s model has such theoretical elegance that it has been widely but wrongly accepted, say some researchers (Snow and Anderson, 1987; Soper, Milford & Rosenthal, 1995; Wahba & Bridewell, 1976).

Maslow himself acknowledged that the levels of his hierarchy are not necessarily located in a fixed order, and that for some people self-actualization may be more important than physiological needs. (Self-actualization can be defined as finding self-fulfillment and realizing one's own potential.) He also recognized that not all personalities follow his proposed hierarchy. Furthermore, Maslow noted that a need does not have to be completely met to be satisfied. Beyond these seldom-cited “exceptions” to the hierarchy of needs model, it may exhibit more fundamental flaws. Researcher John Sumerlin and his colleagues (Sumerlin & Norman, 1992:469-481) concluded that meeting Maslow’s physiological and safety needs is not a necessary prerequisite for self-actualization, after finding fewer differences than anticipated on the self-actualization
scores of homeless men, involved in a daily battle for shelter, food and safety over an extended time, and college students.

The few major studies that have been completed on the hierarchy seem to support the proposals of William James (1892/1962) and Mathes (1981: 69-72) that there are three levels of human needs. James hypothesized the levels of material (physiological, safety), social (belongingness, esteem), and spiritual needs, while Mathes proposed that the three levels were physiological, belongingness, and self-actualization; he considered security and self-esteem as being unwarranted. Alderfer (1972) developed a comparable hierarchy with his ERG (existence, relatedness, and growth) theory.

### Alderfer's Hierarchy of Motivational Needs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Need</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Properties</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Growth</td>
<td>Impels a person to make creative or productive efforts regarding him/herself and his/her environment</td>
<td>Satisfied through using capabilities in engaging problems; creates a greater sense of wholeness and fullness as a human being</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relatedness</td>
<td>Involves relationships with significant others</td>
<td>Satisfied by mutually sharing thoughts and feelings; acceptance, confirmation, understanding, and influence are elements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Existence</td>
<td>Includes all of the various forms of material and psychological desires</td>
<td>When divided among people one person's gain is another's loss if resources are limited</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At present there is little agreement about the identification of basic human needs and how they are ordered. For example, Ryan & Deci (2000:68-78) also suggest three needs, although they are not necessarily arranged hierarchically: the need for autonomy, the need for competence, and the need for relatedness. Nohria, Lawrence, and Wilson (2001) provide evidence from a sociobiological theory of motivation that humans display four basic needs, to: (1) acquire objects and experiences; (2) bond with others in long-term
relationships of mutual care and commitment; (3) learn and make sense of the world and of ourselves; and (4) to defend themselves, their loved ones, beliefs and resources from harm. The Institute for Management Excellence (2001:1) proposes that there are nine basic human needs: (1) security, (2) adventure, (3) freedom, (4) exchange, (5) power, (6) expansion, (7) acceptance, (8) community, and (9) expression.

Notice that bonding and relatedness constitute a component of every theory. However, there do not seem to be any others that are mentioned by all theorists. Franken (2001:45) suggests that this lack of accord may be a result of the different philosophies of researchers rather than of differences among human beings. Therefore, it seems appropriate to ask people what they want and how their needs could be met rather than relying on an unsupported theory. For example, Waitley (1996:23) advises having a person imagine what life would be like if time and money were not an object in one’s life. That is, what would the person do this week, this month, next month, if he or she had all the money and time needed to engage in the activities and was secure that both would be available again next year? With some follow-up questions to identify what is keeping the person from making it happen now, this open-ended approach is likely to identify the most important needs of the individual.

There is much work still to be done in the area of human needs before we can rely on a theory to be more informative than simply a means of collecting and analyzing data. However, understanding thoughts and ideas on human needs is an important part of doing missions with the destitute. It provides an outline of some important issues that must be addressed if we really want to empower people to SHALOM.

4.2 Principles in meeting the needs of the destitute

It would seem that most destitute people are initially focused only on “survival needs”, the immediate basic needs of “food, shelter and clothing”.

However, as these basic needs are met, whether in a shelter or other kinds of programmes, a kind of stability returns. With this renewed stability comes a greater sense of security, almost a “the crisis is over for now” feeling, which subsequently leads
to people starting to yearn to have other needs met (some may view these other needs as higher needs).

From the above research into the theory of human motivation and needs, a number of principles for doing missions with the destitute as this applies to their needs can be derived:

- **Ask them:** Needs differ hugely from person to person, time to time, and situation to situation. Therefore, we should rather ask the destitute what their needs are, and continue asking while we journey with them, than to assume we know their needs according to a model.

- **Bonding and relatedness:** This is the only need common to all theories. Therefore, it can safely be assumed that the destitute experience the same needs. This makes the issue of reconnecting to a community more important.

- **Not hierarchical, but rather preferential.** There is not enough evidence that needs function strictly hierarchically. Rather, we must state that some needs take precedence over others at specific times. For instance, a man who has not eaten would hardly be interested in other needs until he has eaten. On the other hand, people sometimes pursue “higher needs” even if lower needs have not yet been met, signifying that individual factors play a large role in personal motivation.

- **All people, when asked, seem to want to grow in one way or another.** However, people are often frustrated in their attempts to grow, because of a variety of factors, as is often the case with the destitute. Continued frustration of growth over a period of time seems to lead to fatalistic despondency. In the case of the destitute, motivation must then be rekindled. We must literally help the destitute to start seeing something of the SHALOM God intends for people.

- **Needs are complex:** We cannot compartmentalize needs simplistically in a model and leave it there. Human needs vary too much according to individual factors, situations and timeframes. Therefore we must keep in mind that we should engage the destitute in a way that addresses their complex needs.

- **Transcendent needs:** It would seem that most people want to be part of something bigger than themselves, something that transcends them. In doing missions with
the destitute, it appears that for most destitute people, hope in a God that is greater than my needs or situation is very important. In this way they exhibit a need to hold on to someone that transcends their own limited abilities and power, their situation and problems.

- Gaining an understanding of a destitute person’s needs does not mean that we do missions with them from the basis of meeting their needs. Rather, understanding their needs must take us one step further, where we utilize “strength approaches” to empower them to meet their own needs. Part of this is to help them connect to God as the “ultimate empowering agent” in our lives.

5 The destitute are people with strengths and assets

When talking about an asset/ strength based approach, some feel that assets do not have much relevance to people who are hungry, homeless, dealing with deep poverty, or in crisis. However, this is not an either/or issue; but rather one of realizing that meeting basic needs, responding to people in crisis and asset building can and should happen together.

5.1 Why use a “strength based” approach?

Saleebey (1997:88-89) vehemently declares that focusing and building on client strengths is an imperative of the values that govern our involvement with people (in this case the destitute): including equality, respect for the dignity of the individual, inclusiveness and diversity, and the search for maximum autonomy within maximum community. He warns that “…many models and institutions of helping have become pillars of a kind of inequality… They have evolved into means of domination through identity stripping, culture killing, status degradation, base rhetoric, and/or sequestering. We dominate, sometimes benignly with a velvet glove…”

As Ashley (2000:2) puts it: “I believe the asset philosophy compels us to think about approaching all of our human interactions with a strengths perspective rather than with a deficit- seeking lens – from mentoring to outreach and counseling.”
Sumerlin (in Sumerlin & Bundrick, 1997:1309) agrees and challenges researchers “to identify abilities of homeless persons”. He states that researchers have concentrated on disease among homeless people, overlooking their assets.”

While it is relatively easy to determine the needs of destitute people, it may seem much more difficult to determine their strengths. Yet, if we really want to empower the destitute, we must focus on the latter.

Saleebey (1997:23-24) argues a convincing case for strength based approaches:

The strengths perspective is a dramatic departure from conventional social work practice. Practicing from a strengths orientation means this – everything you do will be predicated, in some way, on helping to discover and embellish, explore and exploit people’s strengths and resources in the service of assisting them to achieve their goals, realize their dreams, and shed the irons of their own inhibitions and misgivings….To really practice from a strengths perspective demands a different way of seeing people, their environments, and their current situation.”

For Van Wormer (1998:1) at the heart of the strengths perspective is a faith that individuals, however downtrodden or debilitated, can discover strengths in themselves that they never knew existed. The strengths or empowerment approach is a crucial part of effective helping and is increasingly articulated in the social work literature (Mullaly, 1993). No matter how little or how much may be expressed at one time, as Weick, Rapp, Sullivan, and Kisthardt (1989:362-363) explain, people often have a potential that is not commonly realized. A belief in human potential is tied to the notion that people possess untapped, undetermined reservoirs of mental, physical, emotional, social and spiritual abilities which can be mobilized in times of need. This is where missions with the destitute come into play: in tapping into the possibilities, tapping into not what is but what can be.

Ann Weick and Ronna Chamberlain (in Van Wormer, 1998:5) propose that “…although some problems are too critical to be ignored, they need to be consigned to a position secondary to the person’s strengths once a crisis has passed”. They further explain that “the strengths perspective is anchored in the belief that a problem does not constitute all
of a person’s life. Whether the name of a problem is schizophrenia, addiction, child abuse, troubled family relations or chronic poverty, a person is always more than his or her problem…Focusing on problems usually creates more problems”.

Wikipedia lists a number of very valid reasons for using strengths based approaches that apply when doing missions with the destitute:

1. It is an empowering alternative to traditional ways of helping which focused on needs and problems that had to be addressed.
2. It avoids the use of stigmatizing language or terminology which clients use on themselves and eventually identify with, accept, and feel helpless to change.
3. It is at odds with the "victim identity", epitomized in popular culture by the appearance of individuals on television or talk radio sharing intimate details of their problems, which is inherently self-defeating.
4. It fosters hope within clients by focusing on what is or has been historically successful for the client, thereby exposing preceding successes as the groundwork for realistic expectations.
5. It inventories (often for the first time in the client's experience) the positive building blocks that already exist in the client's environment and which can serve as the foundation for growth and change.
6. It reduces the power and authority barrier between client and therapist by promoting the client to the level of expert in regards to what has worked, what does not work, and what might work in their situation.
7. It reduces the power and authority barriers between people.
8. People are more invested in any process where they feel they are an integral part.
9. And lastly – it works.

This has very real implications for the way we do missions with the destitute. Therapists (and other helpers which engage the destitute) are often comfortable and confident in their role as expert. Effective strengths-based practice requires that we acknowledge that in the life of our clients we are not yet significant, and that it is not our strength that ultimately makes the difference. However, we can use our guidance to
locate and integrate those who are significant into the helping process. And we can play a part in empowering others.

5.2 What strengths?

Strengths-based practice assesses the inherent strengths of people, then builds on them. It uses peoples' personal strengths to aid in recovery and empowerment. Saleeby (1997:101-123) provides us with a list of factors to consider when looking for a person’s strengths:

1. What people have learned about themselves, others, and their world.
2. Personal qualities, traits, and virtues that people possess.
3. What people know about the world around them.
4. The talents and skills that people have.
5. Cultural and personal stories and lore.
6. Pride.
7. The community.

5.3 Dealing with common misconceptions about strength-based approaches

In doing missions with the destitute, there are a number of common misconceptions about such an approach against which we should guard (Van Wormer, 1998:4-6). They are:

5.3.1 “If we talk about strengths, we must ignore needs”

The strengths-based perspective concerns balance. It requires us to notice, acknowledge and respond to needs. Yet, it requires us at the same moment to begin looking for and talking about strengths and capacities. It brings balance to thought patterns and interactions that have previously been only focused on what is wrong. Many of us do not know what strengths are nor do we have a vocabulary for them. Both the popular media and academia have inundated us with ways to describe what is wrong with people. We can employ popular and technical terms for almost every type of failing or problem. Yet, there is no compendium of diagnoses for what people are doing right. A strengths
vocabulary contains ordinary words: loyalty, wisdom, friends, family, church, hope, dreams, and love.

5.3.2 “We’ll be manipulated and duped by clients”
Some, when engaging in missions with the destitute, fear that using a strengths perspective will signal to their clients that they are “soft” or naive, allowing people to abuse the system to gain more benefits or services than those to which they are entitled. However, the strengths perspective deals with respect, caring, and empowerment. It does not suggest that helpers wear rose-coloured glasses or ignore what their training and instincts tell them.

5.3.3 “We’ll be wasting the expertise we’ve accumulated in learning what is wrong with people”
This expertise is as important as ever. Using a strengths based approach is about adding to one’s toolbox, not emptying it out and starting over. It does require some shifts in beliefs and actions as to when to use which tool.

5.3.4 “We’ll be seen as not holding clients accountable for their behaviour”
Saleebey (1997:45) cited a situation where staff members in a child protection agency were concerned that efforts to identify strengths in families where parents were abusive or neglectful would be viewed as implying that the child was responsible for being maltreated. While this is clearly a very sensitive issue, in most cases a careful approach leaves room for both accountability and acknowledging the strengths that parents have.

5.4 Conclusion
All of the above strengthens my conviction that every person in the “helping professions” would benefit from knowing about and using asset or strength-based approaches, even with people we would describe as in extreme need or in crisis. In doing so, we can help them draw upon their existing strengths to deal with the current situation and to reorganize their lives over the long term. Failing to address the strengths side of the human equation, with at least as much attention as we give to deficits and problems, seems to short-change those we profess to help. Perhaps a more fundamental shift is to
think of assets and strengths as basic needs – ones with the same priority and urgency that we have previously associated with hunger for food and thirst for water.

In the words of Saleebey (1997:67):

Hopes and dreams, skills and capabilities reside inside almost everyone; we need to help uncover them as an essential survival tool – and as a doorway out of lack and deprivation. Our ability, when doing missions with the destitute, to notice and talk about strengths and skills while we are attending to crises or basic needs is critical. It can plant the seeds that can be nurtured further as the situation stabilizes.

6 The destitute are people trying to protect their own fragile dignity

The concept of human dignity has been emerging of late in a very strong form, as part of the basic human rights of poor people. “Dignity International” is one example, an organization aiming for “all human rights for all”. Kraynak and Tinder (2003:10-15) contend that the major challenge of our time is to recover a true and authentic understanding of human dignity and to defend it against threats from modern civilization. They wrestle with the dilemma that contemporary society has developed a heightened sensitivity to the demands of human dignity while creating radically new dangers to humanity in the form of the totalitarian state, modern technology, genetic engineering, the practical ethics movement, and radical environmentalism.

Kraynak and Tinder (2003: 14) continues to state that we live in a culture that does not recognize the intrinsic distinction of individual worth.

But what is this dignity, and what does it mean for missions with the destitute?

6.1 What is dignity?

Dignity as a concept conveys deep meaning. It starts with human worth. Focus on the Family (an organization focusing on family ministry) captures this very well in their fourth guiding principle:

We believe that human life is of inestimable worth and significance in all its dimensions, including the unborn, the aged, the widowed, the mentally handicapped, the unattractive, the physically challenged and every other condition
in which humanness is expressed from conception to the grave (Focus on the Family’s Fourth Guiding Principle).18

Seltser and Miller (1993), in discussing dignity and destitution, raise concerns about the basic rights and responsibilities human beings have and express toward one another. This also accords dignity a community perspective: true dignity also includes being treated with dignity by the community of which an individual is part. As Kraynak and Tinder (2003: 15) makes clear, an individual’s dignity is affirmed and strengthened when members of their family and community care for her or him in a weakened state.

Hence, it would appear that true dignity is only possible when people are connected and can relate, in other words when community exists. Dignity is an essentially social and interactive term which implies agreement with a particular status or set of rights, not only by oneself but also by others. To say someone is dignified, or possesses dignity, is to make a social, psychological, and missiological statement. We have dignity and worth because God created us so, and this dignity functions not only internally, but also in community.

From this viewpoint, being destitute threatens the essential dignity of human beings, undermining and often destroying their ability to be seen, and to see themselves, as worthwhile persons (Seltser and Miller, 1993:113). Among the destitute, dignity is that intangible sense of worth that people try to protect in the face of a myriad of factors trying to undermine and break down that dignity. It becomes a constant inner battle that often manifests itself in outward despondency. Destitute people would usually not use the term dignity when describing this battle, but most of them experience this battle daily, on a very personal level. Doing missions with the destitute requires that we understand their constant battle for dignity, that we treat them with dignity, and that we find God’s dignity with them, even in the midst of adverse circumstances.

This human worth translates into “self-worth” and self-respect. As such dignity implies a moral centre, because it is that element of the self and human spirit which is separable from our possessions, our jobs, our physical appearance, and our abilities. Dignity is something deeper than these material factors. In the words of Peter Berger (1986: 101): “Dignity, as against honor, always relates to the intrinsic humanity divested of all socially imposed roles or norms. It pertains to the self as such, to the individual regardless of his [sic] position in society.” Dignity directs our attention to the inner person, to the fundamental aspects of personhood.

Seltzer & Miller (1993:116) note that when we speak about the most fundamental and important aspects of human life, we often find ourselves focusing on self-respect and personal dignity as being the base points against which we evaluate the behaviour of others as well as our own actions. There are many tragedies in life, but when someone compromises their self-respect or loses their dignity as a human being, we are often moved to declare that something very fundamental has gone wrong. In extreme circumstances, such as destitution, it is not only the physical and material deprivation that should trouble us, but the breaking of a person’s spirit: the fact that the inner attitude, the essential person, is destroyed. It is the reduction of a person to purely physical circumstances that represents the greatest threat to dignity.

To act with dignity, to be aware of oneself as intrinsically valuable, can be experienced as a moral imperative. It is what defines one’s essential humanity. Equally essential, however, is the right of all human beings to be treated with dignity: in other words, to relate to them in a manner that allows them to develop an inner attitude, a world of dreams and hopes and intentions toward the future. To attack the dignity of others is to treat them as if they merely mirror their circumstances, as if they accept others’ interpretations of their lives and are subject to other peoples’ agendas.

Dignity also implies an inner intentionality. From the perspective of the individual, dignity is an expression of one’s intentionality toward the world. Dignity is threatened when one merely mirrors circumstances rather than acting upon them. People,
who can experience their lives in terms of dignity, however restricted their environment and choices, are nevertheless pursuing a life project: Their interpretations of the world reflect their intentionality toward the future. They can make plans. People without dignity, in contrast, are individuals without a future, without a project, without hope. They act (or, at least, are perceived) as passive victims who have relinquished their lives to someone else or to circumstances they deem beyond their control (Seltzer & Miller, 1993:117).

This may constitute a major point of critique against the traditional way in which we have engaged the destitute; it is as if our shelters and projects tend to take away free choice, thereby undermining dignity.

Dignity may be perceived as something innate that God gives to all people; it is not dependent on external factors. Kraybill (2003:12) makes this point and adds that it is not based on the ability to care for ourselves or competence to complete a task. Being dependent upon others does not cause us to lose our dignity. Dignity is not a characteristic we can forfeit: it is an inseparable attribute woven into the fibre of our being. We possess dignity because we are created in the image of God.

Seltzer and Miller (1993:114) echo Earll in commenting that, whether we focus our attention on the capacity for moral reasoning, individual choice, interpersonal compassion, or some other understanding, there is a surprising consensus in our religious and philosophical traditions concerning a dignity in human life that is independent of any of the vagaries or accidents of social standing or personal action. There is an inner worth that is to be acknowledged, respected, and acted upon.

Dignity as a concept must be closely linked to SHALOM. In this sense dignity and SHALOM accompany each other closely. If a person experiences inner dignity which then manifests itself externally, she is in fact experiencing SHALOM, even if only to a limited degree. Ganzevoort and Heyen (2004:50-56), in writing about this SHALOM, observe:
The intended SHALOM or well-being thus takes many shapes, because the threats to personal identity and wellbeing are manifold. The type of threat provides the background against which a person’s life story seeks to construct a meaningful response. Life story strategies of escape, action, and reinterpretation should be seen as coping responses to these threats. Some life stories take the form of delivery from evil, closely resembling the narrower sense of salvation. Other life stories describe a fulfilled life and are closer to the broader sense of SHALOM. In still other life stories this SHALOM is only a vision or dream far from the present situation. In fact, in each life story we encounter areas of delivery, fulfillment, and misery.

As indicated earlier, although dignity refers to our inner worth, it remains something that is both internally experienced and externally validated. I truly “have” dignity only if two conditions are met: I must view and carry myself with dignity, and other people must respond to me as possessing dignity. If only the former condition is met, my dignity can neither be recognized nor validated, leading to the suspicion that among other people it is not, indeed, dignity at all. On the other hand, if only the latter condition is met, I will not be able to experience myself in terms of how others view me, a discrepancy that leads to inner uncertainty and self-doubt.

6.2 Understanding the ways in which destitute people try to protect their dignity

We can protect our dignity in many ways in threatening situations, and all of these ways are familiar, even to those of us who have been spared such harsh crises as destitution in our own lives. We can rationalize our circumstances, deny what is happening to us, or stubbornly hope that things will get better. We can resign ourselves to what is happening or adopt a reduced set of expectations or a diminished self-image in order to deal with brutal realities in our lives. In particular, however, when human beings find themselves in difficult situations from which they cannot physically escape, they often attempt to escape psychologically. This takes the form of distancing themselves from both the situation and from other persons who share their current crisis (Seltzer & Miller, 1993:66).
Distancing mechanisms represent one key example of how destitute people cope with their situations. No value judgment is implied in recognizing that people distance themselves from their life situations. Such defence mechanisms are perfectly normal.

Seltser & Miller (1993:66-74) continue their reflections by listing some “distancing mechanisms” as a way for destitute people to cope with being destitute, and a means to try to regain some semblance of dignity. These mechanisms deserve greater attention if we desire really to understand destitute people.

6.2.1 Denial as a means of distancing
Although denial is, properly understood, a separate form of protection, it can be seen as one end of a spectrum of distancing responses. What better way is there to put distance between the self and its present painful condition than to deny that the condition exists at all?

Of course, people can hardly deny that they are living in a shelter or on the streets or that they are dependent on welfare to feed their children. But it is quite possible to refuse to deal with the situation, to either ignore it or deny its significance entirely. Whether someone can continue to do so for an extended period of time, or without serious threats to other elements of personal well-being, is another question.

Asked how she was handling her present situation, a woman responded by saying: “I don’t really know, I don’t even think about it really. I just say, some way, somehow, we’re going to get help – we’re not going to sleep in the streets, we know that, that’s how I feel.” When we asked whether she was anxious or depressed, she said: “I don’t really think about my problems, I don’t really think about them at all. I don’t really feel anything sometimes.” She is not so much denying the fact that she is destitute as the fact that this situation is affecting her in ways that she must think and feel about. All of us have experienced situations that were simply too painful to think about and have engaged in some form of “psychic numbing” as a response.
People who are deeply in denial are likely to continue making very significant mistakes in judging which parts of the world are really under their control and what is likely to happen next. As a result, the longer people remain in denial, the longer they remain victims.

6.2.2 Minimizing the situation
Just short of denial, we find people struggling to minimize their situations. They recognize that something is wrong but adopt an “it isn’t so bad” attitude. This perspective allows them to believe that they are not in particularly bad shape, and thereby they diminish the gap between how they view themselves and the reality of the situation they find themselves in.

For example, a woman residing in a shelter bristles at the very term “destitute,” even though she admits to having stayed outside occasionally: “I haven’t had to be destitute, really. It’s just been overnight in a hotel, or whatever, camping out in a campsite or something……But you know, you work it out.” The act of redefinition is crucial; if I am not “really” destitute, then I am better off than those people who are.

It should be clear that both denying and minimizing reality can undermine a person’s ability to live out a responsible and ordered life. However protective and soothing such mechanisms may be, they are likely to be ineffective in making the problems disappear. Indeed, it is more likely that they will become ways to escape from confronting the hard choices and work that are usually required to turn one’s life around.

Precisely because dignity is tied so closely to our ability to make decisions, to take control, and to lead predictable lives, these defense mechanisms are further steps in undermining an already fragile sense of worth and meaning. People are unlikely to take a destitute person seriously or to view that person as a stable and responsible adult if they perceive that s/he is unable or unwilling to face problems. Even more significant, the latter are unlikely to be able to view themselves with a sense of dignity and self-respect as long as they cannot face what is happening to them.
6.2.3 Isolating the present
A somewhat more sophisticated approach is similar to minimizing but is better able to accept the situation for what it is, in all its seriousness and discomfort. This response involves isolating the present as a distinct and clearly heterogeneous part of the flow of one’s life; although the situation is bad now, it is only temporary, and things will “get back to normal” very soon.

We especially saw this sort of response when parents discussed how they tried to explain the situation to their children. A father says that his children are dealing fairly well with being destitute. He attributes their stability in part to his attempts to assure them that things will change for the better very soon. He reports that he keeps telling them, “Understand, we’re here for right now, it’s not going to be forever, we’re going to move, don’t worry your mom about ‘I don’t like it here, I don’t want to be there,’ because it will only make things worse.”

The comments of destitute individuals often reveal a deep insistence that their present condition does not, and will not, define or confine them in the future. As observers of their lives, however, we might react by praising them for their optimism while wondering if there isn’t some element of self-deception involved here. The ability to view the present as an aberration can lead to the inability to see broader patterns and, therefore, to take more radical steps to change.

6.2.4 “Class” distancing
One of the most frequent forms of distancing behaviour is for people to claim that they are not really the sort of people who are typically destitute.

The best illustration of this sort of response is to quote Hanna (2002 Popup interview) (Pseudonym):

Just being out in the streets - I’ve never experienced that. I come from a fairly good home, a very good home……I didn’t even know about anything like that to tell you the truth, and I was really sheltered. I didn’t even know what a cockroach was until I was about seventeen; I had never seen one before.
The implications of these sorts of statements are made even more obvious by the mention of characteristics that are closely associated with class identity. For example, education is sometimes mentioned as setting the person apart. One woman believes she has received better treatment from society at large because of her class background: “I went to the right schools, and I got the best education. I lived in the …… area, so it’s a little bit easier for me.”

Intelligence is another personal attribute that people use to disassociate themselves from stereotypes about the destitute. One woman speaks at length about her ability to speed-read, saying that she reads so quickly that she can’t enjoy it. She claims that she has taught herself to read upside down in order to read more slowly, a procedure that creates odd stares when she is reading on a bus or in other public places. Another woman brags that she has an I.Q. of 148, “so how could I be a bimbo?”

Still other people focus on an entire set of lifestyle and personal value orientations that distance them, by virtue of background, from other destitute people.

Another interesting approach can be found among people who have been dependent on welfare for a long time. For them, the key step is to distance themselves in terms of their present orientation, using their past experiences to intensify their self-understanding as people who are no longer willing to live dependently. A woman tells the story of her childhood, when her parents were forced to live on welfare. She recounts the embarrassment of having social service workers make surprise visits to the house at eleven o’clock at night to see if all of the children were still living at home. Her present attitude is clearly shaped by these experiences:

I remember all of that as a child, and I was determined that, no matter what, I would never do that when I was an adult, I would never live on welfare. So far I haven’t, we’ve been on it one time, and that was for a month, and that was just to get medical coverage when I was pregnant with my son. We got the welfare, and we got the medical coverage, and the day my son was born, my husband got a job and he’s worked ever since, and other than the disability thing, we’ve never had to go for help – welfare is fine because there are a lot of people who could not make it, they have no other way, but I would rather do anything else than that.
Once again, we see the clear efforts at class distancing. Welfare is “fine” for other people “who could not make it, they have no other way,” but she is the sort of person who would “rather do anything else than that,” precisely because she has climbed out of the class situation where she must be dependent upon the system.

**6.2.5 “Scapegoating” the destitute**

When carried to an extreme, distancing turns into a form of criticism, of blaming and judging other people for their condition. We are interested here in how and why some of the destitute themselves engage in the business of blaming the victim.

The milder form of such criticism is heard when people insist that they have tried hard to improve their own situations and suggest how unusual this is. Similarly, turning the question of destitution into one of willpower is a common way to distinguish oneself from others who refuse to make the effort to change their situations. This is an extremely common pattern of thought, usually accompanied by specific criticisms of people who either do not make the effort to improve or who are simply the type of people who are not interested in change.

One woman expresses disdain for people who go from shelter to shelter over a period of months or years, a pattern she interprets as meaning that they have no desire to improve their situation. She notes that some residents spend all of their time in their rooms and need to be kicked out of the shelter completely: “You can’t pamper them. You can give them an inch, they expect a mile. We’ve got a couple who came in….who aren’t grateful at all they’re living in the place free.”

Shelter residents also often draw a sharp distinction between their peers on the basis of the use of drugs and alcohol. Some people adopt a somewhat more sympathetic tone, but the stereotype of addicts and alcoholics (however true or untrue it may be) remains – that these people are unable and unwilling to take care of themselves.
6.2.6 Conclusion
Sometimes distancing works, and sometimes it fails. As one woman in Popup admits, there is a point at which you have to recognize that you are, in fact, destitute: “I used to see people going down to this building and standing out, and I used to always wonder what this is, and now I know what it is, because I’m here with them.”

The motives for adopting various sorts of distancing language and claims are complex, but the central point is that destitution threatens the personal dignity of those it traps. Perhaps if destitute people were more convinced that their underlying sense of worth would be upheld regardless of their living conditions or financial situation, they would be much less likely to adopt the various strategies of distancing.

Also, and in particular, missiologically, if destitute people can be taught or helped to view themselves as God sees them, it would contribute tremendously to their sense of dignity, thereby restoring their intentionality towards future goals (that we encapsulate in the word SHALOM).

It is particularly saddening to recognize the extent to which destitute people accept the broader society’s stereotypes of their motives and character. By going to such lengths of distancing themselves from other destitute people they tacitly accept these stereotypes, implying that these are true for others but not for them. Indeed, this may be one of the greatest and most debilitating effects of destitution; in a society that does not reaffirm the basic dignity of each person, destitution becomes a terrifying status that must be denied or reinterpreted at all costs, even at the price of undercutting solidarity with other people in a similar position.

6.3 Missions with the destitute mean restoring human dignity
Seltser & Miller (1993:86) list the following conditions for dignity among destitute people, conditions which must actively be pursued when we do missions with the destitute:
6.3.1 Autonomy
The most important condition of dignity is an appropriate degree of autonomy. Human beings require a sphere of choice, a sphere of action over which they have some control and discretion.

6.3.2 Predictability
The second condition for dignity is that we enjoy some degree of predictability about our future.

6.3.3 Self-expression
Experiencing dignity depends also upon opportunities for self-expression: the ability to express who we are and what we feel.

6.3.4 Social solidarity
In addition to fostering autonomy, predictability, and self-expression, having a place to live also provides a deeper conviction that we are social beings worthy of being part of a community, adults who can take care of ourselves and fit into society.

6.3.5 Conclusion
It is one thing to assert philosophically that all persons have dignity; it is quite another to enable people to experience their lives in that way. I have pointed to a set of conditions that seem to be essential if people are to possess that sense of themselves as whole and worthwhile selves: they must have some opportunities for autonomy, predictability, self-expression, and social solidarity with other persons and groups. To undercut these conditions is a serious threat to their dignity.

Destitution presents a serious and systematic threat to this central need to see oneself as a worthwhile, respectable, and dignified human being. Thinking about the conditions of dignity reminds us how our own lives would be undermined if we lost our homes and become destitute, and how wretched an experience it would be to find ourselves on the street or in a shelter.
The application of such a concept to the experiences of destitute persons should be quite obvious. We are concerned about how destitute people experience their own intrinsic sense of dignity, how other people and institutions treat them as people with dignity, and how destitute people uphold their own dignity in the midst of their experiences. These issues tell us something not only about the destitute, but about our actual, lived-out values as well. If it is true that we can best learn about a society by looking at the people in it who are the most disadvantaged, then examining the question of the dignity of the destitute may be an appropriate starting point for learning about how (and, indeed, whether) we truly believe that all persons deserve to be treated in certain ways.

Listening to the voices of the destitute provides us with an important and revealing insight into the central values of society. Stripped of most of the standard trappings of status and role, the destitute confront us with troubling questions. Do we truly value and respect people for their own sakes? Is the worth of a person determined by place of residence, occupation, or income?

If dignity is dependent solely on our being human, it should not be affected by our material situation or our social status. But we experience dignity through our worn self-image and the way we are treated by others. If I view myself as someone who is worthless, and if others treat me in that way, my dignity has been significantly threatened. Dignity not experienced is, too often, dignity denied.

7 The destitute are people experiencing God

One might think, mistakenly, that the destitute would either not confess spiritual experiences, or would reflect negatively on such experiences. However, it appears the opposite is true. They humble us in teaching us how to experience God in the absence of material goods, or a home, or all the other creature comforts we are used to. They “convert” us to look for God at work in different ways in unexpected places.

But let the destitute speak for themselves…
The following interviews and parts of interviews were conducted over a period of three years in Popup, a development project in the inner City of Pretoria, and are all published by permission. Where names are used they are pseudonyms, for the sake of the protection of the dignity of the people interviewed.

7.1 Thembi’s Story

When we spoke with her, Thembi (pseudonym) was a twenty-five-year-old black, single, pregnant woman living in the shelter with the youngest of her three children. She came into Popup because she had nowhere to go. She had been evicted from her last apartment when she was unable to pay the rent and had been shuttling between shelters and friends’ homes for the previous couple of weeks.

Her childhood was difficult, but she says that “we never had to do without.” Her mother was on welfare after divorcing her father; this did not seem like a major deprivation, however, since they lived in an area where “everybody was on welfare.” She ran away from home when she was thirteen, believing that her family “just didn’t care enough for me.” She married a man who abused her, and she is pregnant now from another brief relationship. She has held a few cashier jobs at the minimum wage, but she hasn’t worked for a year because “I was just turned off doing it, it’s not enough money for me and the baby.”

She tells a story of years filled with “very terrible things”; being homeless, by comparison, is “really nothing for me.” She was kidnapped and shot, and she was raped several times many years ago. She feels she has suffered from severe racial discrimination.

And she is having a very difficult time in the shelter. She complains about the rules and the fact that the staff will not let her discipline her child the way she wants to: “You have to go by their rules when you’re here, so that’s why when I get my own apartment, it’s going to be different, and my child is going to have to get used to it.”
How does she deal with what has been happening? Throughout the interview she refers to ways in which God has helped her. What has kept her going is just having faith that God really will do something: “It’s greater than whatever you can do, its inside, the Lord knows your heart; he knows the inside of your soul. It’s really great when you feel like that. It saved my life all these years……Everybody needs different things.” When she was most terrified about being out on the street with her young son, what saved her was the fact that “I just knowed that I had to really stop whining about it, put my faith in Jesus that he won’t let us be on the street.” All she hopes for is that Jesus will continue to act in and on her life, because “your life is already planned…..Jesus makes plans for you…I don’t make plans ahead, I just take it as it comes.”

She attributes to divine intervention the fact that things are not even worse. She notes proudly that she was never obliged to live on the street and that her mother took the family in during her last pregnancy. She seems convinced that in spite of all that has happened, “the Lord is always working miracles for me.” Thembi also reveals a certain sense of hopelessness or apathy about what will happen in the future. She finds it very difficult to speculate about where she will be in five years, saying: “I don’t even have a boyfriend.” She attributes her problems with men to the fact that “they can’t deal with me because I’m a real person…I don’t even have friends, I don’t have nobody, I’m just by myself.”

Her religious interpretations are perhaps the only source of meaning and connection she can experience at this point in her life. Not only do they allow her to avoid drawing the conclusion that she is entirely on her own, they also provide comfort and reassurance that things will get better because someone else is really in charge. She is torn between her insistence on her own independence and strength (particularly in relation to her son’s discipline and her living conditions) and her fear that nothing will ever change unless someone else (namely God) can intervene in her life.
Thembi’s references to God represent a desire held by many individuals to understand life in terms of a deeper frame of reference than their social circumstances. Thembi believes that there is a divine plan at work in her life that makes sense out of otherwise meaningless events. There is more to her life than meets the eye. If not, then she would feel desperate, because the events taken in isolation present a very bleak picture of her prospects. Her sense of personal dignity and hope rests in her faith that Jesus is making plans for her.

Thembi’s story is just one of many which clearly reflect the fact that the destitute undergo real spiritual experiences, onto which they often hold as an anchor in their desperation.

7.2 Lessons learned from the destitute in Popup

In Popup, almost all of the destitute people finding shelter in the project spoke in terms of some form of religious belief. Their attempts to understand how God is involved in their lives represent their best efforts to discover meaning in what is happening to them and to continue to believe that their lives somehow make sense. Their understanding of God’s involvement in their lives varies and differs greatly. However, it would seem they all share a need for meaning.

Seltzer and Miller (1993:87-98) differentiated the following as ways in which destitute people try to understand and rationalize God’s involvement in their lives, as they try to find meaning in what they experience:

- Vague religiosity
- God is seen as judge
- God as protector
- God as comforter
- God as justifier.

A “close-up” view of these responses reveals much about the personal experiences of the destitute.
7.2.1 Vague religiosity
This refers to a belief in God that is maintained without a concomitant belief that God has much to do with specific life events. Such a position is often described in terms of a very private transcendent faith or prayer life that does not seem to impinge on one’s external life.

It almost claims: “God is there, He is at work in life, but He is not concerned with the finer details of my life”. One woman’s response to our question about God’s role in her life offers a good example: “Yeah, I believe in God. He didn’t help me through a lot of things, but I don’t get into all that other kind of religious stuff, all that cult stuff. I pray; I do my own praying.” While religion functions as a supporting factor in her life, she shies away from making any explicit connection.

Another woman said that God is “doing what He can….I don’t think God has anything to do with what I’m going through on this, I don’t know. But I believe in God. I don’t think He’s the one causing it.” When asked specifically whether God has any part at all in the solution of her problems, she responds “no”.

For other people, the connection between faith in God and the current situation is either unreflective or confused. One person says: “I pray every night. I don’t think there’s any relation between my situation and God per se. I do believe that if I didn’t have the faith that I do, I’d probably be a lot worse off.” Another woman denies that there is a connection between God and her problems but then asserts that “everything has a purpose” and that God must have a plan for what is happening to her family.

The few anti-religious comments by the respondents are surprising because they are so rare. They seem to stem most frequently from people who were raised in strict religious families and who have purposefully moved away from religion as adults, in reaction to what happened to them as children. One woman raised as an Old Apostolic member remarks: “I can see how people can get so wrapped up in a religion in a situation like this, because they need somebody to believe in, when they don’t believe in
themselves. And it’s like, I’m telling you, I believe in me, and I’ve had a hard time just sticking that out.”

7.2.2 God as judge
Those who are destitute voice questions regarding what is commonly known as the problem of theodicy, that arises because of three claims, held together in tension: God is the all-powerful creator of everything that is, and He is an all-good loving and caring force; yet evil and suffering exists in the world this loving God created.

Destitute people struggle to explain the existence of suffering, a suffering they experience first hand. One possible answer is that suffering is deserved. Although few people adopted the view that God was punishing them for their sins, it surfaced often enough to bear examination.

An example of this kind of thinking is that of a middle-aged woman who is a single mother who had recently escaped from an abusive marriage at the time of her interview. In recounting her experience with her partner’s drug use and physical violence, she reveals her belief that she is at fault: “…couldn’t figure out if it was me, I was saying, maybe I’m not cooking right, or maybe the house isn’t clean enough, I was thinking it was me…. I’m trying to be Miss Perfect….but I came to find out it wasn’t me, it was him.”

It another example, an older man is convinced that he must have done something wrong to earn the suffering he has been undergoing: “I believe that God do nothing without a reason. I must have done something in my lifetime to be in this shape. He is punishing me for something that I have done. He’s not letting me down, he’s showing me what I don’t need to do and what I need to do, and when he does make up in his mind that he’s going to help me, I’m going to come up.”

A married couple adopts the same attitude. The wife comments, “I don’t blame God and I don’t fault God, because I know if I was doing what I should be doing as a religious person, as a mother, as a wife, then I wouldn’t be in this predicament, or like
this.” Her husband responds that he feels the same way and that “you’re old enough to know right from wrong and basically that’s what it comes down to. God was right, and what was said was right, and I’m doing wrong, and I know it isn’t right.”

7.2.3 God as protector

Another way by which destitute people can find meaning in what is happening to them is to believe that God protects them no matter what may occur. In this way their suffering is given meaning by reaffirming their faith.

One married woman describes herself as “a born again Christian and reports that she prays often and hard about her problems: “We believe God will help us find what we need and if we do our part and keep trying, things will work out.” She believes that God is indeed answering her prayers: her serious health problems are in remission, and their arrival at the shelter has improved their prospects.

Another woman reports that she believes that God is “with me and helping me, and guiding me, because a lot of things that I had set out to do, I never would have come through if he hadn’t been by my side.” This understanding of God as guide is shared by another homeless woman who remarks: “I thank God for everything, every little thing, I’m thanking Jesus for everything, for the shelter, and even my children are saying, ‘Thank you Jesus for everything.’ And it’s been a lot of help. And I know that God will open more doors for me and my family.” Note the ways in which such an attitude allows her to experience faith in the future and to trust that there are ways out of even the darkest rooms.

These attitudes seem to be overly optimistic and maybe even unrealistic, yet this anchor is what many destitute people believe and hold on to.

Sometimes the view that God protects one comes extremely close to denial that real suffering has occurred at all. A strongly committed Christian woman responds pointedly to the suggestion that God might be letting her down by admitting that “I have had that feeling at one time, but I know that he would never let us suffer.” Her time of
doubt was related to a physical illness, but she has arrived back at a place of firmer faith: “When I found out that I had this lump in surgery, I thought that he was making me suffer, but I prayed every night, and I think he was making a way for us.”

An elderly man views his present situation as a “mission” and a “quest” that God has placed him on in order to “build up strength within ourselves.” God is “watching over us,” and he attributes each event that might have turned out more badly to God’s presence and protection.

An even more dramatic story of transcendent intervention comes from a woman who was stabbed savagely by a man with whom she was living. She relates (in a somewhat amazed tone) what happened to her during that episode:

I wasn’t very religious at the time, but I heard a voice say, “Ask the man for a hug. “You’re kidding! This man is stabbing on me, and you want me to give him a hug? I didn’t question who was talking...” And I heard another cool calm voice say, “Give the man a hug, ask the man for a hug.” Well, I don’t know any other way out of this situation, so I said, “Will you give me a hug?” And the guy kind of snapped to reality again... And said, “Let go of my arm.” I had hold of his arm with the knife in it. And I heard the voice say, “Trust him”...I said, okay. I let go of his arm. He dropped the knife, gave me a hug, and took me to the hospital. I never asked, “Why me?” because I knew why me... Down the road, I started pondering, “Who was speaking to me?”

People cry out for a caring and protective God at their most extreme moments. A woman tells of how hysterical she became when she was about to be evicted from her apartment: “I said, ‘Oh God, what am I going to do?’ And I prayed and I cried, say, ‘God, help me get through this.’” She believes that praying in this way mattered, for God helped show them the way to this shelter.

God can function as a protector in many subtle ways. For example, a woman we interviewed speaks proudly of her refusal to become a prostitute, linking this decision with her religious identity and faith: “I have a spiritual side of myself, and I believe in God, I believe in Jesus Christ, and also I believe He is my helper. So because of my
spiritual background and my belief in God, that’s what brought me through, and not to lower myself to a standard of money.”

She delivers a long sermon-like explanation of her situation, making the following specific theological assertions: (1) if you don’t do what God wants you to do, you “really can’t rely on God protecting you and taking care of you”; (2) the Bible provides the basic guidelines people have to follow; (3) she has experienced both sides of God’s presence and is convinced that if “I choose to be disobedient, I choose to live the way I wanted to and get off from the things I want to get off into, I reap what I sow”; (4) having chosen in that way, “I don’t feel like God is responsible for where I’m at, I feel like I myself is responsible for why I’m in this situation”; but (5) she has not “given up on God,” and she still recognizes that God is really there although she is the one responsible for her own life.

In another explanation of suffering offered by the destitute, the responsibility for it is split, with God acting to protect us only when we take the first step. Such a view can be combined with a judgmental orientation, whereby the individual’s guilt prevents God from helping us until we are ready. These are the views of a middle-aged woman who sees God as continually giving her “a way out,” then waiting for her to take it. “But now that I did, he’s making things look brighter and brighter for me.” She is convinced that God is providing help to her gradually: “He’s not going to just put it at my feet; he’s giving it to me gradually so I can grasp the whole and see exactly what he’s trying to show me.”

It is clear that God is seen as “The Protector” who functions as an anchor and encouragement in many ways in the lives of the destitute. In a way He is conveniently bigger and stronger than our worst problems; hence people can believe He is the protector, in spite of suffering.

**7.2.4 God as comforter**
From the perspective of the destitute, many voice the belief that, even though God may not be able (or even willing) to protect them from suffering and tragedy, faith may be
able to comfort them throughout these experiences, if only by reminding them that they are not alone. One of the most common ways in which the destitute try to make sense of their troubles is to hold onto the belief that God remained with them, even when He was not protecting them from terrible trials. For example, one woman says that she believes in God and sees Him as support, placing the emphasis more on God’s presence than on His explicit help: “Times are going to get bad for all of us, and we got to keep the faith, and keep the faith means we have to be strong, don’t give up.”

Comforting can be as simple and gentle as a sense of presence and positive feeling at the end of a difficult day. As one woman expresses it: “Sometimes when I feel so insecure, I pray to God to help me….to believe this and that. And sometimes I’ll go to sleep and I’ll suddenly wake up and I don’t know what it is, and I’ll go, ‘Oh, maybe because I didn’t pray.’ I’ll pray, and I’ll feel better.” For another troubled woman, the key is to remember that although “there will be trials and tribulations,” God has said that “I won’t give you any more than you can stand, so that’s a relief.”

The experience of God’s comfort can also merely involve a sense that He is involved and will act somehow, whether or not it is to protect or save. The difference between focusing on protection and focusing on comfort is revealed in the comments of a woman who says that, “…even down as far as I feel I have gone I still feel that the Lord is taking care of us in here somewhere too. That’s probably why I haven’t totally fallen apart.” She admits that “it’s very easy to ask: ‘why is God doing this to me?’” But it is “a very humbling thing” to recognize that “there are people living here who are much worse off than I am.” God does not protect her from experiencing pain or tragedy, but her awareness of God prevents her from falling apart in the midst of her problems.

A woman who was brought up in a religious family speaks simply about the centrality of prayer and faith: “As long as you believe and have the faith, things will work out.” She recognizes that she cannot make it on her own: “You are going to always have problems, but these problems here is a little bit more difficult than anybody can handle.”
Some destitute people describe God’s comfort being experienced in more dramatic ways. A woman whose son died was unable to forgive her sister for allowing this to happen until she had a powerful religious experience: “I was just laying there one night sleeping, and all my lights went out in my apartment, and there was just like a glow, and there was my son standing there, and he told me, said I must forgive and forget and must make up with my sister, I must go out because he wouldn’t want this, it’s just like a disturbance to him. And I made amends with her, I went and talked.”

Belief in God’s comforting presence can also make sense of suffering by providing a baseline beyond which no harm really matters. A woman with cancer reports in a calm and almost detached tone of voice: “Death to me will be a beautiful day…I’m not afraid to die. I’ve never let that bother me one bit.” She teaches her children to pray and believes that God provides answers that help her deal with life: “You’re walking down the street, and all of a sudden there’s an answer.” She insists that “the good Lord’s going to guide us, and that’s that.” What has happened to her is her responsibility, not God’s, but God has “always been there” for her in the worst times, “and it’s been open for me, I just have to reach out and get it.” The “it” is not so much protection or even guidance, but a presence, a sense of God upholding and comforting her family. There is a deep element of humility in her attitude, evinced by her comment that “He gave his only begotten son for us, so who am I? Who am I to deny God’s presence, and who am I to feel that I don’t deserve that presence?

7.2.5 God as justifier
While we may not believe that God protects us from bad experiences or even comforts us in the midst of our suffering, we might still believe that God will somehow cause everything to turn out all right in the end, even if it takes another life to reveal that to us. For example, one person reports that God’s caring means that he will eventually be helped in some way: “I feel like when I’m going to heaven, because I’m not that bad of a... I’m not no, what do you call them people who go to church four times a week and do wrong four times a week? – hypocrite, I’m not a hypocrite.”
Two related cognitive moves are apparent in this statement. He is assured that he will go to heaven, and thus that his suffering is not permanent. But also (and perhaps more significantly), he can believe that what is happening to him is not really his fault because God will not punish him for being as bad as a hypocrite. He has done his best, and that is all God can expect from him.

God may also justify our suffering by redeeming it. One woman repeatedly tells herself that “maybe right now I’m going through all of this, maybe God’s getting me prepared for when I am older where I have everything that I possibly might want.” Her mother used to tell her that when you have problems, you just have to keep going; God is carrying you and all of your troubles.

An even clearer statement of this viewpoint stems from a woman who regularly talks to God and admits to Him that she doesn’t know why she is going through all of this turmoil. But she is convinced that “I’m going through this for something. I don’t know what it is yet, but maybe it’s to make me a better person, or to make me more sensitive to other people.” When her husband asks her why their children are also suffering, her response is, “Hey, it’s going to make them stronger adults.”

A woman who shares this view repeatedly defines her homelessness as “a learning experience” through which God is putting them for the sake of other people: “I’ve never been in this situation before, but once I know we’re going to get out of it and we’re going for it, once we make it we can help other people, we can help somebody else.” When her husband became depressed about his inability to provide for them, she replied that “this is an experience that God wanted us to go through, and this is his way of showing us how to make it through, this is a learning experience.”

Another way in which suffering can be justified is by recognizing that God is ultimately in control of it. A shelter resident struggling to understand what has been happening to her attempts to maintain a balance between utter pessimism and unrealistic optimism. Her solution is to trust that God must be involved in the process somewhere,
and therefore she cannot – indeed, she must not – try to control or understand what is happening. “I just keep trying, keep looking, something’s eventually going to turn up….I said, “Well Lord, I tried to do it on my own, I just get failure after failure. I’m going to just put it in your hands. If it’s for me, I know You’ll give it to me. If not, I know it’s not for me.”’”

She also believes that part of the purpose of suffering is to move to the point of acknowledging her dependence on God: “Some things, He’ll allow some things to happen before, for you to realize that he is God.” She believes that “everything is done for a purpose” and that God “will turn the devil on you, but he won’t let him destroy your life…The main thing is to have enough faith.”

A mother of two uses the image of testing in relation to God’s ability to redeem human suffering:

When I get mad, sometimes, I say, “AAH HH, why’d you do this to me?” But I feel that God’s there, He’s there. Right now we’re all being tested to see how we can handle things, and it’s just like truth or consequences, you do something and every single day you’re going to make a decision that’s going to affect the rest of your life, I don’t care what it is…….Everything we do is our decision……that’s ours, that’s not God who’s making you do it, that’s us. I feel like, if you get in a jam and you need the help, you can call on him and ask for help.

A single father is committed to his faith that “with Jesus Christ on your side, can you lose?” He attributes his beliefs to his mother, who helped him to see that God is the greatest “ally” which a person can have. When he considers the troubles he and his daughter have experienced, he falls back on his belief that God is trying to remind him of what is truly important and that their suffering therefore is serving God’s higher purpose: “I understand why He’s doing it….It’s bringing me back to reality, remember who you are, where you’re from, what is real and what isn’t real.” Reality for him involves being wrenched out of the everyday material world, and the proof of this perspective is the course his own life has taken: “I’ve had realty, I’ve had a number of cars, I’ve had seven cars at one time, I’ve had rental property, I’ve had bank accounts and things of this nature, and everything I had I worked for. And I lost it all. I’ve lost it all.” The loss of
everything is a sign, not that God has deserted him, but rather that God is revealing something new and unexpected to him.

7.3 Lessons learned from the spiritual experiences of the destitute

In terms of the theological and spiritual experiences of the destitute, a few trends emerge, even though these experiences can vary greatly from one individual, and must therefore constantly be reflected upon.

The first such trend is the search for meaning. What does it all mean, why this suffering, where is God, how is He at work in our lives? The destitute person seems to answer these questions by holding on to a deeper frame of reference.

Thembi’s story is a good example. Her references to God represent a desire held by many individuals to understand life more deeply. Thembi believes that there is a divine plan at work in her life that makes sense out of otherwise meaningless events.

Another trend that emerges from the stories of the destitute is that of “hope”. They hold on to hope, sometimes almost blindly, even when hope is often a vague undefined notion that God will work in their lives to change them: to “make it come out all right”. Their hope tends to be oriented to some indefinite time in the future. The “present hope” they do have seems to be passive: it manifests itself in the belief that God is present in their suffering, He is helping and comforting – often in ways that cannot be defined or understood – but this belief serves as an anchor.

Yet another trend has to do with the fact that almost all destitute people seem to profess faith in God. It is often as if the destitute confess a belief in God because there is a virtual prohibition against denying God’s existence in our societies. Nowadays this is changing, but traditionally it is the truth. At the same time most destitute people have had some experience with “shelters” or “projects”, where they feel and experience the pressure “to believe”. And they often confess a belief in God simply to be acceptable in the environment of the shelter – which means they often hold on to superficial notions of
God and spirituality. Consequently their belief tends at least to some degree to be false, self-deceptive or superficial.

They often do not equate a belief with God in going to church. Their belief tends to be personal, and functions in their everyday lives in unexpected ways, where they are: on the streets. The destitute do not accord much weight to the church, almost as if they do not trust it. They believe in God, but not in the church. This is a sobering thought: the church as it functioned in the past simply did not cut it for the destitute; we need a new kind of church if we wish to engage them meaningfully, a public church that will meet them where they are, even if that means we must meet them on the streets.

Lastly, it would seem the destitute are often more committed to belief in God – in spite of their suffering – than we are. Their faith seems almost childlike in its lack of knowledge at times, but the commitment is strong.

What can we conclude then? Simply this: doing missions with the destitute would help them (and ourselves) discover new meaning. It would operate to reaffirm hope or discover it where it is absent: not an unrealistic kind of hope, but a hope anchored in God and His actions in our world, past, present and future. We need to discover with them how hope can bring about changes in the present, rather than only in the future. It can build on their commitment to believe in God – it is easier to talk with people about God when together we are looking for the fingerprints of God in our lives. And we need a new kind of church.

8 Conclusion

It is clear that a greater understanding of the experiences of the destitute must lead to radically different approaches when doing missions with them. Such an approach would “humanize” them again, would see them as persons, individuals in their own right. It would acknowledge and build on their dignity and strengths. It would, together with them, combat systems and social dynamics that take away their choices, or marginalize
them, or keep them trapped in poverty. Only then can we truly start to speak about “missions with the destitute”.
Chapter 5  
Towards a Model of Missions with the Destitute: Care with Others

This chapter offers perspectives and guidelines for “helpers” engaging the destitute, by developing a model of missions with the latter. In using the term “helper” throughout this chapter, the term must be seen to include any person, church or organization (usually a CBO: church-based organization) that becomes involved in missions of this nature.

1 Introduction
The idea behind devising a model of missions with the destitute is to provide helpers (individuals, churches, CBO’s) with a basic framework that should enable the incorporation of best practice strategies into this framework. In this way helpers can then flesh out this basic model (framework) by their own best practice strategies. While such a model could be directive in the sense that it promotes action leading to valued outcomes, it is not a rigid recipe. Rather, it is non-directive in the sense that helpers (in their interaction with destitute people) will determine their own best practice strategies. Hence it could promote missions of this nature.

2 Why a model?
A model should help to develop intentionality in our missions with the destitute. What is our purpose in missions with the destitute? Do we simply intend to be involved in some way that soothes our consciences as Christians, or are we actively seeking SHALOM with the destitute?

A model should also help us to understand the scope of the problems inherent in destitution, so that we can try to define the scope of our own involvement in missions with the people affected. It would seem that the problem of destitution is simply too
broad and integrated, too complex, to be addressed in its entirety by any one person or even organization. This simply means we need to join hands with others who are involved in missions with the destitute. Defining the scope of such missions should actually help to improve the quality of services we provide. For instance, one church might focus on running an overnight shelter, while another might concentrate on outreach on the streets, or delivering social services, or delivering counselling services, or skills training, or housing. The possibilities are endless, but we need to take each other’s hands!

Lambourne (1983:28) argues for a model of care that incorporates the whole church community, where healing is seen as a satisfactory response to a crisis (such as destitution), offered by a group of people (such as the church community). He argues against a model of care that is “professional, problem solving or problem preventing, standardized or defined”. He also argues against the over-emphasis on problem solving and cure in the church’s pastoral ministry. Instead he calls for the church to develop a model of care that is lay, corporate, adventurous, variegated and diffuse. He does not argue that the first set of concepts and practices be abandoned, only that the second set should be allowed enough credibility to supplement and if necessary correct them.

Such a model would:

…emphasize the role of the group or team in the healing work, rather than the work of the skilled professionals who keep free of personal involvement. But it still allows for the particular roles of healing specialists such as doctors, probation officers, and clergy properly trained in pastoralia, who are pictured as encouraging and advising the group (Lambourne, 1983:289)

As Swinton (2000:103) adds such a model would be erected on the foundation of the actions of the community of “the whole people of God.” It would concern itself with the development of healing, sustaining, guiding and reconciling forms of friendship (where friendship signifies the relational bonds between people) that will enable the formation of the type of community that reveals a new way of living in the world and for the world (Swinton, 2000:103).
Important principles emerge from the statements above. Firstly, the importance of the involvement of the whole people of God: where the lay, the everyday, members of the congregation, start to reach out to the destitute by befriending them. Once relationship develops, they can then be drawn into a caring community (the church, or other newly-formed communities), where they can continue to receive support from the lay people, but where they can also be helped in specialized ways by professionals. Secondly, the need for the involvement of specialized professionals in missions with the destitute becomes apparent. At the same time, such a model should not be rigid, but, rather, “corporate, adventurous, variegated and diffuse”, as was stated earlier.

Therefore we describe missions with the destitute as a two-pronged involvement. Firstly, the broader informal involvement by the whole people of God with the intention of drawing the destitute into a caring and healing community (this would differ from communities formed by the destitute among themselves in that it actively promotes healing towards SHALOM). Secondly, the narrower, more focused involvement by specialized professionals.

3 Underlying principles for a model of missions with the destitute
Manstratt Development (Manstratt Report, 2003:38), in a report compiled for government in November 2003, proposed a “best practice model” for shelters in the Tshwane area. This model was helpful, but incomplete. It proposes a good “procedural” model for destitute people in shelters, moving from intake, assessment and treatment to skills development and job placement. However, if we are to meet the destitute “where they are at”, then a purely procedural approach is not the best option. Added to this, not all destitute people end up in shelters. We need a model that engages the destitute outside of shelters as well. In addition, this model is not holistic enough.

The danger of any model is always that helpers may use it in a way that places people in boxes, or that will “forcefeed” them through “our program”. Needless to say, such an approach will not only defy the object, but will actually be detrimental to our efforts. How then do we guard against such misuse?
Wagers (1998:2) argues for a model that facilitates mobilization, that is orientated towards direct action, is rooted in the Gospel ethic of prophetic, non-violent transformation and agape, that combines theory and practice, and that includes critical reflection. This reflection must guide helpers and allow them to change their consciousness, regarding involvement, engendered through this process. Using this heightened awareness, structural change can be sought.

From work undertaken in the previous chapters I suggest the use of a number of underlying principles that govern the use of a model. Although every helper, church or CBO organization that becomes involved with the destitute in any way must determine their own governing principles, these principles should include (among others) the following:

1. They must address the needs of destitute people from a strength-based approach (Chapter 4).
2. They must promote dignity, where we respect people’s own choices and goals (Chapter 4).
3. They must be grounded in a biblical unction for action based on God’s preferential option for the poor (Chapter 3).
4. They must promote belonging and relatedness, therefore displaying intentionality toward reconnecting people to communities, whether the existing community of the church, or newly formed ones (Chapter 4).
5. They must enable the church or other helpers to meet the destitute where they are, in the process enabling the church and helpers to become more “public”, to become the “church of the market plain” again. In this way these principles must work from the “underside” (Chapter 3).
6. They must address the range of factors involved in causing destitution (Chapter 2).
7. They must be dynamically interactive, where helpers and the destitute interact, grow together, discover God together; causing conversion in a reciprocal way (Chapter 3).
8. They must strive to discover SHALOM (Chapter 3).

9. They must include continuous reflection and evaluation, so that a model of missions with the destitute can be changed and improved.

10. They must be comprehensive and holistic, thereby enabling the helper to understand the scope of the problem of destitution, in order to enable her or him to define both the limits and extent of involvement in terms of missions with the destitute.

11. They must empower people (this includes both the destitute as well as helpers involved in missions with the destitute).

12. They must enable different helpers to take each other’s hands in a complementary fashion, where one helper focuses on specific aspects of missions with the destitute, while other helpers deal with other aspects. In this way our combined efforts can aim at addressing the whole problem of destitution.

The last number of principles necessitates further explanation.

3.1 They must include continuous reflection and evaluation…

...so that a model of missions with the destitute can be challenged, changed and improved.

A model that is rigid will be “forced” upon people seen as the “have nots” by people who view themselves as the “haves”. In contrast to this, a model that is constantly reflected upon by all parties involved so that it can be changed and improved will become the property of all together. Such a “fluid” model can be updated, changed, improved or even discarded and remade as we learn from one another. This is only possible if helpers consciously open themselves up to learn and be converted by the very people they try to help.

3.2 They must be comprehensive and holistic…

...thereby enabling the helper to understand the scope of the problem of destitution, in order to enable the helper to define both the limits and extent of involvement in terms of missions with the destitute.
This simply indicates that destitution is a complex problem; therefore, assisting the destitute is a complex, multifaceted effort. In the light of this complexity, helpers should try to focus their effort, and then collaborate with others, so that together we can empower destitute people across the complexities of the problems they face.

3.3 They must empower people
Empowerment is a central theme in missions with the destitute. It has many faces, but basically concerns enabling the destitute to understand and subsequently control the mechanisms which affect their lives. A conventional understanding of the verb “to empower” would be to invest a person or authority with the ability to do something. According to Strachan & Peters (1997:131) people acquire power for themselves through a complex process involving organization, participation, consciousness-raising and mobilization. The essential feature to note is that empowerment is essentially a process of self-acquisition. Power, in this context, refers to the ability of people to exercise choice in the political, economic, social and cultural and spiritual decisions which affect their lives.

Kellor and Mbwewe (1991:78) define the empowerment of women as:

A process whereby women become able to organise themselves to increase their own self reliance, to assert their independent right to make choices and to control resources which will assist in challenging and eliminating their own subordination.

Although drawn from the women's context, this definition could be applied to any group — structured by class, caste, religion, language, regional identity, culture or race — which experiences exclusion from the benefits of society. However, empowerment goes beyond the widening of economic opportunities for marginalised people. It embraces a range of dynamics including confidence-building, analysis and mobilization for political and social action. Kellor and Mbwewe's definition contains a clearly political dimension emphasizing women's right to independence and control. Their definition crucially describes empowerment as a process of self organisation and self assertion.
A dilemma is evident here. A process which engages the poor in taking control of their own development cannot be imposed by outsiders. Although it can perhaps be encouraged through external support, by definition it stands opposed to “top-down” approaches in which professionals tell others what they should do. Therefore approaches which are labelled “empowering”, especially those which are externally funded, contain an inner contradiction which requires critical examination. True empowerment is based on the belief that ordinary people are capable of critical reflection and analysis and that their own experience is an essential resource in the process.

True empowerment will imply “participation”, a term derived from development theory: the active involvement of the people to be empowered. Participation in this sense uses “awareness-raising” to involve local people in defining the problem, collecting information, analyzing it and then deciding on their next step. Such an integration of personal experience with analysis can assist people “to organise and influence change on the basis of their access to knowledge, to political processes and to financial, social and natural resources” (Slocum et al., 1995:45). Such participation would also engender “ownership”, where people take personal ownership of the processes in which they are involved.

In the context of the present study, empowerment refers to the enabling of people, so that they can change, grow, transform, become connected, gain a voice, discover SHALOM. Coleridge (1993:52) furnishes an interesting and valid comparison of “empowered vs. non-empowered” persons that illustrates some of the ways in which people become enabled when they are empowered:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Empowered</th>
<th>Non-empowered</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Open to change</td>
<td>Closed to change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assertive</td>
<td>Aggressive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proactive</td>
<td>Reactive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-accountable</td>
<td>Blames others</td>
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<tr>
<td>Self-directed</td>
<td>Directed by others</td>
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</table>
For helpers, empowerment as an approach implies changes in their role from that of service-deliverer and funder of projects to that of facilitator, catalyst and advocate of processes of transformation. This causes missions with the destitute to happen, instead of missions to the destitute. It is based on the simple but attractive principle that addressing the symptoms of poverty and destitution is not enough: the underlying causes must be tackled. In this process, the poor become agents of their own development (Korten, 1987:147-149). Helpers are often quite content to deliver services which are both needed and appreciated. However, if they do this without reference to the structures which produce or maintain the problem, their impact is severely limited. Only if they address the underlying social, political economic and cultural systems which cause poverty can they be said to be empowering.

3.4 They must enable different helpers to take each others’ hands…
...in a complementary fashion. In this way our combined efforts can aim at addressing the entire problem of destitution.

CHAM (Community Homeless Alliance Ministry) voices this principle strongly on the front page of its website: “CHAM’s current outreach strategy extends into nearly every religious, community, or politically based-coalition that deals with homelessness or poverty in any way”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Uses feelings</th>
<th>Overwhelmed by feelings</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learns from mistakes</td>
<td>Defeated by mistakes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confronts</td>
<td>Avoids</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lives in the present</td>
<td>Lives in the past or the future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Realistic</td>
<td>Unrealistic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thinks relatively</td>
<td>Thinks in absolutes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Has high self-esteem</td>
<td>Has low self-esteem</td>
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The principle is clear: empowering destitute people requires efforts from many role-players, such as the destitute themselves, government, individuals, churches, organizations such as NGO’s and CBO’s, and others. A model of missions with the destitute will make it possible for these role players to join hands.

3.5 They must allow helpers to integrate sharing faith and meeting social needs

Missions with the destitute are conducted by “helpers” together with destitute people. “Helpers” in this context have been defined above. A defining characteristic of helpers doing missions with the destitute will be faith: talking about Christian faith, otherwise we will not be conversing about “missions” but merely about social services. If we keep in mind that helpers do missions with the destitute, “sharing faith” becomes a process of discovering God (at work) with the destitute, and “meeting social needs” becomes a process of empowering destitute people.

Against this background the issue of integrating the sharing of faith and meeting social needs arises. Offhand it seems an easy issue: surely meeting social needs is faith in action; but in reality the issue is more complex. Many helpers sense a faith-based responsibility to reach out to the world outside their walls, but they respond to this call in different ways. Helpers might focus on the spiritual dimension of human need, assisting people to develop a relationship with God. They might emphasize people's social and emotional well-being by providing services or advocating justice. Or they might blend these priorities.

Evangelism (sharing faith) and social ministries have been typically understood as important but separate activities, which are studied separately (Roozen, M & Roozen, C, 1984:34). Evangelistic churches are "otherworldly", placing stress on "salvation for a world to come," and making "a relatively sharp distinction ... between religious and secular affairs." Civic and activist churches are this-worldly, or take "with considerable seriousness this present world as an important arena for religiously motivated service and action" (1984:34). While 40% of churches in the Varieties of Religious Presence study two or more orientations combined, evangelist-activist combinations were in the minority (1984:89).
Meyers (1999:5-11) argues that our separation of faith and social services is rooted in “the great divorce that separates the spiritual and physical realms” (1999:5), brought on by our modern worldview. In this worldview loving God and witnessing is seen as spiritual work, while loving neighbours and social action takes place in the physical world (1999:6).

Hiebert (1982: 35-47), in addressing the dichotomy between sharing faith and social action, advocates a more traditional worldview as opposed to a modern worldview. The traditional worldview is holistic, with the spiritual and material worlds interrelated in a seamless whole (1982:39). Meyers (1999:8) adds that the Biblical worldview is close to the worldview of traditional cultures.

The Biblical worldview is holistic in the sense that the physical world is never understood as being disconnected or separate from the spiritual world and the rule of the God who created it. The fact that the Word became flesh explodes the claim that the spiritual and physical can be separated meaningfully.

Hence, faith becomes good deeds (material and physical action) that express the love of God (Meyers, 1999:9).

Sider and Unruh (2004:51-57) identified five basic ways in which churches (helpers) integrate the sharing of faith and meeting social needs:

3.5.1 Explicit evangelism is not a part of the church’s outreach mission

Helpers are committed to serving the needy and advocating justice in Christ’s name, but without making an explicit attempt to bring those they serve to Christ. Faith motivates and shapes their outreach, but the focus of their ministry falls on meeting social needs, not nurturing faith in others.

3.5.2 Evangelism is valued and practised, but not in the context of social ministry

Helpers evidence a dual mission focus, with evangelism and social ministry taking place along separate, parallel tracks. Missions focus primarily on one or the other, with little
overlap. Social ministries normally do not include overt faith sharing; evangelistic ministries do not meet material needs.

### 3.5.3 Little conventional social ministry is present

Helpers care about healing social ills, but they express this caring through evangelism and discipleship. The underlying belief is that social needs are essentially spiritual in nature. Helping people in need thus requires tackling the root of the problem through a process of conversion and discipleship that bears fruit in fundamental life changes.

### 3.5.4 No significant social action or evangelism

A further type of church carries out no active community outreach. They might sponsor an occasional evangelistic or compassionate ministry activity (such as an annual Bring-a-Friend-to-Church day or a Thanksgiving canned food drive), but they are not oriented toward the world outside the walls of the church. Their main focus is placed on internal ministries of worship, fellowship, and discipleship.

### 3.5.5 Evangelism and social ministry are practised

In this type, evangelism and social action are distinguishable but inseparable, like the two sides of a coin. This type is based on the belief that the physical, spiritual, moral, and relational dimensions of human nature are intertwined. Promoting social and spiritual well-being represent equally important, and interdependent, aspects of mission. Meeting social needs opens doors to sharing faith, and spiritual nurture is believed to enhance the outcomes of social interventions.

In doing missions with the destitute, helpers are constantly challenged to develop this type of integration between evangelism and social ministry.

### 3.5.6 Conclusion

A good model must facilitate the integration of faith and social services, irrespective of the ways in which specific helpers understand the relationship between their own faith and social action. The obvious goal would be a healthy integration of both aspects; in other words a good model must incorporate both “sharing faith” (in a non-coercive way) and “meeting social needs”.
4 The model
The development of a model for missions with the destitute is now explained step by step in order for it to make sense.

1.1 Missionary action of three kinds
The model starts with a distinction between the different kinds of missionary actions in which helpers can engage when doing missions with the destitute. These three kinds of action do not follow a chronological order. They are:

4.1.1 Missionary action to prevent people from becoming destitute
This should form the basis of our efforts, based on the tenet that God never intended people to live in destitution. Therefore our communities should enable the poor not to become destitute when they experience hard times. There are many poor people in our world, and many become destitute – which is the worst kind of poverty. Our efforts should empower the poor, so that they do not drift into destitution.

4.1.2 Missionary action to heal destitute people
Once people become destitute, they enter a vicious circle where they are broken down as people. In this process, their dignity, personhood, ability to fend for themselves, self-worth, physical condition and ability to maintain relations are wounded and damaged. At the same time their access to power, security, employment, housing, education, skill, and information is damaged as they become more marginalized. Missionary efforts of this kind should empower already destitute people to become “whole” again, where this wholeness is captured in the word SHALOM. In this way we empower destitute people to heal.

4.1.3 Missionary action to stop people from becoming destitute again
Once destitute people have broken out of the trap of the poverty cycle, they need to be empowered to sustain their new life, so that they will not become destitute again. Efforts of this kind help them to sustain a good quality of life.
4.2 Missionary action...

Missions with the destitute must remain missions, with the whole range of meanings associated with such missions and developed in Chapter 3 being incorporated into our involvement with the destitute. Broadly speaking, this includes the realization and motivation that:

- Missions with the destitute flow from the Missio Dei
- Missions with the destitute must be contextual
- Missions with the destitute bring about (reciprocal) conversion
- Missions with the destitute discover SHALOM
- Missions with the destitute require a Public Church.

The word “missions” also implies action, where we “engage” or “become involved” with the destitute, a conscious choice to act instead of accepting a distorted reality that causes people to be and to become destitute.

1.2 Missions “with” the destitute

This is a very strong principle inherent in doing missions with the destitute, such missions must be “with” them, and not “to” them or “for” them. In the model this is depicted as two figures holding hands, journeying together. In their journeying together, interaction takes place that would cause conversions, this is illustrated with an arrow between the two figures, an arrow that works reciprocally to both sides. These conversions would always be reciprocal, as we influence one another, and change one another while we journey together (Chapter 3).

1.3 Growth to discover and experience SHALOM more and more

The arrow in the diagram below, building on the basis of missionary action to prevent destitution, represents growth, where already destitute people are empowered to discover and experience SHALOM more and more (we would prefer that people do not become destitute at all, but if they do…). Once people move out of destitution (represented by the broken line), our efforts can be focused on empowering them to sustain their new life.
1.4 Empowerment towards SHALOM

Whether we are involved in action to prevent destitution, to heal destitute people or to prevent them from becoming destitute again, this action must be defined by the word “empower”. In this sense empower denotes the process of self organisation and self assertion in which the destitute help themselves. The role of the helpers then becomes one of facilitator, catalyst and advocate of processes of transformation.
1.5 Empowerment from both the inside out, and the outside in

In exploring the causes of and factors contributing to destitution in Chapter 2, a model was developed that distinguishes between the internal and external factors involved in and contributing to destitution. Internal factors require an “inside-out” approach: the destitute are empowered to develop on the inside, so that they can then change their external situation.
Empowerment from the inside-out focus mostly on the internal empowerment of individual destitute people, and the processes involved in or linked to this internal empowerment. This implies approaches that will enable helpers to empower destitute people to become whole, grow, change and develop on the inside, so that they will become self-motivated to change their own lives on the outside (“inside-out”). This is explored in greater detail in Chapter 6.

In the same way external factors would require an “outside-in” approach; this focuses mostly on strategies and interventions that should empower destitute people by creating an external environment or situation that could enable them to grow, change, develop and become whole as they choose to. “Outside-in” empowerment deals with issues mostly outside of the direct control of destitute people, therefore “external” to them: such as access to housing, or clinical services, or access to empowering communities, or advocating social justice and a number of other issues. These issues are sometimes also called “structural” or “societal factors” contributing to destitution. This is explored in greater detail in Chapter 7.

These two sets of factors interact, and often overlap, so that no one reason for destitution can be singled out. The proposed model depicts these two approaches to empower destitute people, and the way they overlap.
1.6 Formal and informal engagement of destitute people

Destitute people seldom become involved in empowerment efforts on their own initiative, simply because they do not enjoy access to such initiative, or the power to drive these initiatives. This is where helpers come in: they facilitate, advocate and catalyze the process of transformation so that destitute people can become empowered. This facilitation, advocacy and catalysis is called “engagement” in the model.
Engagement may be both informal and formal. Informal engagement should probably always come first. This is engagement where the “whole community of God”, meaning specifically non-professional Christians and members of the church, becomes involved in missions with the destitute. They reach out and befriend destitute people with God’s love (in whatever way. In this way trust develops, relationships are built, hope is instilled, and destitute people become more open to being empowered.

Formal engagement refers to the actions and efforts carried out by specialized professionals with respect to empowering the destitute. These can include organizations, specialist individuals such as social workers or medical professionals, or counsellors. Often people will be referred to this kind of help, or they will be “taken by the hand” through informal engagement into more specialized empowerment agencies, which we shall term formal.
1.7 Within the sphere of “God at work with people”

Lastly, all the above occurs within the sphere of “God at work with people”, so that we often find God already there when we engage the destitute. In this regard we should remember clearly that we are involved in the Missio Dei, when we engage in missions with the destitute, it is and remains God’s missions. Consequently we discover SHALOM with the destitute, we do not take it to them, and are also reminded that we are instruments of God’s work.
1.8 Naming the model

In naming the model, I try to reflect all the perspectives and aspects discussed previously. Therefore I term it: “Missions with the destitute: A continuum of empowering care”. The complete model may be illustrated as follows:

Missions with the destitute: A continuum of empowering care
2 Conclusion

No model is perfect, but a good model can often accord structure to otherwise chaotic and haphazard efforts to make a difference. This model is a framework for missions with the destitute; it is not a recipe or programme, and should not be treated as such.

The question which now arises regarding the strategies that can be used to flesh out the framework of this model is answered in the following chapters.
Chapter 6

Missions with the Destitute from the Inside-out

The question often asked among people working with the destitute is: “Why don’t they want to change?” This is a perceived reality, usually one that is construed as “unwillingness” to change, and such seeming “unwillingness” is often dealt with rather harshly by helpers. However, it would seem that it is a perception based on wrong assumptions – for it is mostly not true that destitute people do not want to change. This chapter discusses issues such as internal motivation and helping people become stronger on the inside, so that they will be internally empowered to face external problems, or to grow towards SHALOM.

Missions with the destitute from the inside-out focus on the internal empowerment of individual destitute people, and the processes involved in or linked to this internal empowerment. This implies approaches that will enable helpers to empower destitute people to become whole, grow, change and develop on the inside, so that they will become self-motivated to change their own lives on the outside (inside-out).

Whereas “inside-out” missions with the destitute focus on approaches that promote internal motivation (growth, wholeness, development, change) in individual destitute people, “outside-in” missions (chapter 7) concentrate more on approaches that improve the systems and circumstances outside of the direct control of destitute people that make them, or keep them, destitute. As noted earlier, one should bear in mind that even though we make the distinction between “inside-out” and “outside-in” missions, there is a strong overlap and dynamic interaction between the two.
1 Introduction
How do we help destitute people become stronger on the inside in a way that will empower them to grow so that they can realize their own dreams? How do we assist them to change in their attitudes, choices, beliefs and motivation without resorting to wrongful coercion? How do we aid them to experience SHALOM as an inner well-being that will facilitate renewed outward behaviour? What strategies and principles can helpers use? These are complex issues, and there are no easy answers.

When doing missions with the destitute from the inside out, a number of issues and principles come into play, such as:

- Reaching out and engaging destitute people in a way that “connects” us to them, so that helpers can start to play a helpful role in people’s lives.
- Understanding what motivates people, and then empowering them to become self-motivated to change.
- Comprehending how to empower destitute people to become “whole” again on the inside (and then learn to stay whole).
- Understanding the role of “beliefs” and “limiting beliefs” in the lives of people, so that destitute people can be challenged towards, and empowered through, the fostering of new beliefs.
- How to foster helpers’ competencies in order to promote and facilitate empowering “inside-out” missions.

2 “Inside-out” missions as the fostering of social ties
The importance of “community” in the lives of destitute people has already been touched upon. It starts with the need to belong and relate: internally experienced by all people, the destitute included. It encompasses being part of a valued group that empowers its members to become self-motivated to change (internally), making community an important part of missions with the destitute from the “inside-out”.

However, social ties and being part of a community also functions from the “outside-in” to empower destitute people, in the sense that this creates support and
encouragement, and also external social spaces (and environments) that empower the destitute towards sustainable living. Becoming part of a community starts with the fostering of social ties.

2.1 Destitution often means social isolation

Research continues to demonstrate that destitute people are relatively socially isolated (Rossi, 1989; Shlay & Rossi, 1992), with few friends (if any) and little contact with family members. The lack of strong ties to family and friends is important because it means few have the social and economic support to move off the streets. Helping destitute people re-establish ties to family and friends, or create new ties, may therefore either prevent destituteness or its re-occurrence (Shlay & Rossi, 1992:145).

Most destitute people are single, often never married (Rossi, 1989:24). However, even though most destitute people are not married, many do have children. Many destitute people report either having “worn out their welcome” with their family and friends prior to becoming destitute, or never having experienced much familial support. One interesting question concerning the family and social networks of destitute people is whether their reported lack of ties represents a long-term condition or is a more recent phenomenon. There are at least three arguments that can be advanced about the family relations of people who are destitute, all three supported by research to some degree (Snow & Anderson, 1993:55):

1. They used to have ties with their families some time in the past, but have worn them out prior to becoming destitute;
2. Their family situation was dysfunctional and/or abusive prior to becoming destitute; or
3. There was never much family support to begin with.

Evidence exists for all three of the possibilities above. Impoverished adults usually exhaust the resources and aid provided by family, friends, and social welfare agencies before becoming destitute (Wong & Piliavin, 1997:410). There is also support for the argument that many of the people who are on the streets became destitute because they were never associated with stable and supportive familial networks (Nyamathi, Bennet, &
Leake, 1997; Reilly, 1993; Snow & Anderson, 1993). Many studies have shown that destitute people are more likely to have spent time in their youth in a foster-care situation and/or to have had other types of adverse childhood experiences, such as physical or sexual abuse (Koegel, Melamid, & Burnam, 1995; Sosin, Colson, & Grossman, 1988; Susser, Lin, Conover, & Struening, 1991; Toro, Bellavia, Daeschler, et al., 1995). As a consequence of such childhood experiences, many of these people may have little or no family support upon which to draw.

Taken together, all of these findings indicate that numerous people who are destitute may possess few family resources that they can rely upon once they are on the streets.

2.2 Destitute people also have social ties

As noted earlier, studies have consistently shown that destitute people do not have extensive ties to relatives or friends, and that they generally have fewer social ties than the non-destitute (Rossi, 1989:25; Shlay & Rossi, 1992:132). However, these same studies indicate that destitute people are not “totally isolated,” as might be inferred from some discussions of disaffiliation among the destitute (La Gory et al., 1991:202) and none suggest that there is a virtual absence of any ties (Shlay & Rossi, 1992:134).

Although destitute people typically maintain some social connections, these ties are not very strong and may not provide much support. The social ties of destitute people have been found to be weaker and less efficacious than the social support obtained by people who are not destitute (La Gory et al., 1991:207; Snow & Anderson, 1990).

As summarized by Snow and Anderson (1993:22), the social relationships developed between destitute people are “plagued by contradictory characteristics.” On the one hand, friendships are often quickly formed, and there is generally an ethos of sharing whatever modest resources are available. Yet at the same time, there is also a chronic distrust of one another, and a fragility and impermanence in these social bonds, perhaps best exemplified by the fact that many people cannot provide the last names of those they consider friends (Rowe & Wolch, 1990:185; Snow & Anderson, 1993:23). The reasons for these weak ties may stem more from the precarious conditions under
which the bonds are formed than from any personal characteristics. More specifically, the ability to quickly establish and sever weak ties may embody an important survival value, particularly in the “resource-depleted context” of being destitute (Snow & Anderson, 1993:24).

Destitute people who have more social ties with other destitute people may experience a harder time moving off the streets. Making friends and links with others living on the streets may act as “a double-edged sword” (Grigsby et al., 1990:142). In particular, although they may help with survival on the streets, these ties may block efforts to move out of destitution. Developing coping skills for the street may inadvertently reinforce an identity of “self-as-destitute” (Rowe & Wolch, 1990:187) that increases the difficulty of making the transition into a situation of non-destitution. Developing alternative communities that foster social networks will help in adjusting from the street and from destitute people’s networks.

2.3 Conclusion
Because destitute people often lack many social ties, particularly with family and kin, it has been suggested that efforts that would support existing relationships, and promote new ones, might be beneficial (Interagency Council on the Homeless, 1991:17; Lehman, Kernan, & DeForge, 1995:925). Among the strategies proposed are a case management approach that also provides activities to assist people in expanding their networks in healthy ways (Grigsby et al., 1990:153); drop-in centres as a way to promote the formation of new social networks (Rowe & Wolsch, 1990:199), and social network therapy (Buchanan, 1995:73-75; Drake et al., 1993:499-500).

Consequently helpers should learn to value the importance of social ties in the lives of destitute people. Stronger social ties may make all the difference for the destitute, which becomes a reality when helpers also become friends, or when destitute people are invited into existing communities. Such communities might even consist of newly-formed communities of previously destitute people now helping one another to grow. At the same time helpers should learn to respect the already existing social ties of destitute people (even though they may be very weak links), so that those connections can rather
be strengthened and used as a basis for support and motivation, than to simply negate them.

The church, as an open community of loving care, can play an invaluable role in befriending, supporting, encouraging and helping the destitute. These kinds of missions are external to the destitute, in the sense that they cannot force communities to accept them: hence the initiative should come from the communities themselves to reach out and engage the destitute (outside-in missions). Even so, being part of a community exerts an internal motivational effect on people (inside-out missions).

3 “Inside-out” missions as outreach and engagement

In developing the model for missions with the destitute in chapter 5, the word “engage” is used to describe the process whereby helpers “connect” to destitute people in a manner that empowers them. Outreach and engagement also facilitate missions from the outside in, by fostering social ties and connecting destitute people to communities (Chapter 7). A strong overlap is evident here. However, outreach and engagement as part of inside-out missions are meant to empower destitute individuals from the inside; from this strengthening, relationships develop that help people to grow stronger on the inside. The notion of “engagement” consequently needs to be developed further.

Firstly, it is proposed that this engagement take place on the streets; that it will usually be person to person (only after trust has developed can helpers attempt to connect destitute people to valued groups or communities) and that it requires building trust and instilling hope (on an individual level) (Kraybill, 2003:23). This simply implies that helpers must engage the destitute in ways that will convince them we want to help them realize their goals (not our programme or goals).

It is also proposed that this kind of engagement is made possible through “outreach” where helpers go out and meet the destitute on the streets. Destitute people will very seldom reach out to helpers on their own, except maybe for food or shelter, and then usually only for the short term. The reasons for this tendency are varied, but often
destitute people have had negative experiences with helpers (McMurray-Avila, 1997:54), and have been victims of violence (Weinreb, et al., 1995:497).

Erickson and Page (1998:2), in an article entitled “To Dance with Grace: Outreach & Engagement to Persons on the Street”, consider that the process of outreach and engagement is an art, best described as a dance. “Outreach helpers (helpers) take one step toward a potential client, not knowing what their response will be—will the client join in or walk away? Do they like to lead or follow? Every outreach worker has a different style and is better at some steps than others. To ‘dance with grace’, when the stakes are high, that is the challenge for all of us” (1998:1). Similarly for Francis & Goldfinger (1986:578) the helper’s first task is to engage people who are destitute, developing and nurturing trust and a working alliance.

3.1 Outreach as strategy to connect helpers with destitute people

“Outreach is the initial and most critical step in connecting, or reconnecting a homeless individual to needed health, mental health, recovery, social welfare, and housing services” (Erickson & Page, 1998:3). Outreach is primarily directed toward finding homeless people who might not use services due to lack of awareness or active avoidance (McMurray-Avila, 1997:25), and who would otherwise be ignored or under-served (Morse, 1987:16). Outreach is viewed as a process rather than an outcome, with a focus on establishing rapport and the goal of eventually engaging people in the services they need and will accept (ICH, 1991:3; McMurray-Avila, 1997). Outreach is first and foremost a process of relationship-building (Rosnow, 1988:29) and this is where the dance begins.

In summary, “outreach” is the process where helpers “find” destitute people (individuals) where they are (usually on the street), with the purpose of subsequently engaging them in services that will empower them to grow or change to what they want to be. Outreach can also be viewed as “making contact” with destitute people.
3.2 Values and principles that should govern outreach

According to Erickson and Page (1998:2) successful outreach programmes must be based on a core set of values and principles which drive the intentionality of our engagement with the destitute. Values and principles also serve to set the stage for developing realistic goals in an arena of limited resources and potentially slow progress. Borrowing from a number of authors, they identify the following values and principles to govern outreach practices:

- A “person” orientation: Exemplary programmes possess a philosophy which aims to restore the dignity of homeless persons, dealing with clients as people (Axelroad & Toff, 1987:45; Wobido et al, 1990:23-25).
- Recognizing clients' strengths, uniqueness, and survival skills (dealt with as strength based approaches in Chapter 4).
- Empowerment & self-determination: Helpers can facilitate this by presenting options and potential consequences, rather than solutions (Rosnow, 1988:16), by listening to homeless persons rather than "doing" for them, and by ensuring a balance of power between homeless individuals and outreach helpers (Rosnow, 1988:17).
- Respect for the recovery process (Winarski, 1994:41): Behavioural change is situated on a continuum. Small successes are recognized and any move toward safer/healthier activities is viewed as a success. Clients need to recognize for themselves how change may be beneficial, in relation to their own goals.
- Client-driven goals (Winarski, 1994:42): Services and strategies are tailored to meet the individuals' unique needs and characteristics (Morse, 1987:17). Helpers begin with clients' perceived needs and proceed from there.
- Respect (Cohen et al, 1990:507): Helpers are respectful of people, including their territory and culture. Outreach helpers view themselves as guests and make sure they are invited, welcome, or at least tolerated. Helpers must take care not to interrupt the lifestyle of the people they are trying to assist. Lopez (1996:112) makes the point that clients do not lose the right to be left alone in the privacy of their home even when they call the streets their home. Clients are viewed as the
experts in their life and on the streets. The worker takes the role of consultant regarding that lifestyle.

- **Hope**: Helpers instil a sense of hope in clients while helping them maintain positive, realistic expectations. Unrealistic expectations may bring on clients' cycles of frustration, despair, and hopelessness, as well as anger at the helper/s. Helpers restore hope in clients who have faced years of disappointment, as well as reframing raised expectations. The worker needs to communicate to the client that changes may take considerable time, effort, and patience (Morse et al, 1991:67).

- **Kindness**: People are always treated with warmth, empathy and positive regard, regardless of their behaviour or presentation.

- **Advocacy**: Helpers advocate for social justice on many levels.

Outreach practised in this fashion by helpers would truly make missions with the destitute possible.

### 3.3 The role of “phasing” in outreach and engagement

According to Plecia, Watts, Neibacher & Strelnick (1997:60-61) four main goals of outreach may be distinguished:

1. The first is to care for pressing needs, including ensuring safety, providing crisis intervention, referring to urgent medical care, and helping clients with immediate needs for clothes, food, and shelter.
2. Helpers must develop a trusting relationship in order to achieve the additional goals of…
3. …providing services and resources, whenever and for as long as needed.
4. Lastly, helpers aid in connecting clients to mainstream (formal, specialized, professional) services.

According to Erickson and Page (1998:7) an inherent factor related to these goals is the notion of phasing. Objectives are developed and reached over a period of time by taking small steps that are directed to a more structured, service-oriented goal. Persons often move from accepting food from helpers, to developing trust, to discussing a goal that in part can be achieved through services provided in the community and finally to
accepting those services. Specific goals are gradually developed by both the client and helper.

Outreach and engagement principles carry over into case management and are viewed as an ongoing process. As trust develops, clients take a more active role in setting and achieving (their own) goals. Ultimately, the goal is to successfully phase or integrate persons into the community and/or into professional services which will assume the task of promoting community integration. Just as clients are “phased” into outreach services from the streets, they are phased into the community from outreach (Erickson and Page 1997:8)

In terms of missions with the destitute, “phasing” should be defined as the “non-directive intentionality of helpers to empower destitute people step by step (as determined by destitute individuals themselves) to become whole, grow, change and develop according to their own pace, desire and valued outcomes as stated by the latter.”

Successful outreach is subsequently phased into engagement. Whereas outreach as a strategy would be something that can easily be engaged in by laypersons (the whole people of God), it would seem that engagement would gradually promote a phasing into more formal, professional and specialized missions with the destitute.

### 3.4 Engagement as a follow-up strategy to empower destitute people

Engagement follows outreach; indeed, Morse (1997:22) describes engagement as a crucial, on-going, long-term process necessary for successful outreach. It is also described as the process by which a trusting relationship between helper and client is established. This provides a context for assessing needs, defining service goals and agreeing on a plan for delivering these services (Barrow et al., 1991; ICH, 1991; Winarski, 1994). Some clients require slower and more cautious service approaches (Morse, 1987:23). The engagement period can be lengthy, and the time from initial contact to engagement can range from a few hours to two years (ICH, 1991:4) or longer. Effective helpers can "establish a personal connection that provides a spark for the journey back to a vital and dignified life" (Winarski, 1998:34).
Engagement reduces fear, builds trust, and sets the stage for "the real work" to begin (Cohen, 1989:506). Morse (1991:47-53) classifies engagement in terms of four "stages". They are:

3.4.1 Stage 1 - Setting the stage
Helpers become a familiar face and begin to establish credibility in places which homeless persons frequent (Morse, 1991:47). They use a non-threatening stance/approach (Cohen et al, 1990:17), and obtain some kind of permission from the client, either verbal or non-verbal, before approaching. In these early stages, helpers gently cease interactions that appear too overwhelming to clients and try again later.

3.4.2 Stage 2 - Initial engagement tactics
Helpers attempt to engage the potential client in conversation, beginning with non-threatening small talk (Morse, 1991:49). This allows helpers to assess the situation for signs of problems and also the impact of the interaction. Is the client feeling intruded upon? (Morse, 1991:49.) Helpers may provide items that act as incentives (Cohen, 1989:508), such as food, drinks, vitamins, toiletries, etc., with real and perceived benefits that promote trust.

3.4.3 Stage 3 - Ongoing engagement tactics
Helpers begin to "hang out" and "share space" with clients (Morse, 1987:81). As clients become more comfortable, helpers begin to provide or help the client to meet some important needs that can be easily solved or obtained. This might include offering transportation to obtain clothes, linking the client with medical care, and furnishing incentive services that are based on clients' perceived needs (Cohen, 1989:506).

3.4.4 Stage 4 - Proceeding with the outreach/maintaining the relationship
As trust is established, helpers assist clients to define service goals and activities, which may include the obtaining of housing, income, and medication (Morse, 1991:24). Staff accompanies clients to appointments, help them prepare for upcoming tasks, and assist in the negotiation of service settings.
3.4.5 Strategies towards respectful engagement

At Honolulu's Health Care for the Homeless Project, the staff uses six simple engagement strategies in their interactions with destitute people:

- Treating people with positive regard, by demonstrating that helpers are glad to see them and care about them. Helpers remember details of past encounters and discussions. They are honest, humble, and share information about themselves when appropriate, to equalize power and respect.
- Working with their perceived needs.
- Providing incentive items and services, as listed above.
- Letting clients set the pace whenever possible.
- Communicating effectively, both verbally and non-verbally. For example, helpers move to the client's level. If the client is sitting on the curb, the worker sits on the curb. Helpers gauge the expression of language so that it fits with that of the client's in terms of vocabulary, speed, eye contact, and culturally relevant responses.
- Being creative. For example, an outreach dog is used by one helper. A pet is a great ice-breaker and has been effective in connecting with some paranoid and very isolated mentally ill persons. One woman, who would previously never speak to helpers, will now talk to the dog (but still not to the helper), providing opportunities for ongoing assessments, and topics for future discussions. Art is also used as an engagement tool, and client interests, such as hobbies, books, and collections, are incorporated in incentive items and discussions. When possible, outreach helpers transfer engagement strategies on the streets to the clinics, where clients can receive further care. For example, a drawing by a client on the streets might be displayed in the clinic where pertinent services are offered. Other effective programmes use creativity as a foundation for outreach and reach out to engage homeless persons through such non-traditional approaches as the use of theatre, the arts, and creative grass-roots community organizing.

4 “Inside-out” missions that empower people to become self-motivated to change

There is an inherent intentionality in missions with the destitute, a purpose which should include (among other defining principles):
• A drive by helpers to realize God’s preferential option for the poor.
• A desire amongst helpers to discover SHALOM as it applies in the life of individual destitute persons, together with the destitute themselves.
• A drive by helpers to help destitute people to grow, transform, develop and change their own lives.
• A respect by helpers for people’s own choices, and the dreams that they would choose to realize in their own lives.

This purpose implies “change”, but a change that the destitute bring about in their own lives because they have been empowered to become self-motivated to change. The role of helpers consequently becomes one of facilitating a process and creating an environment in which destitute people can become motivated to change. Henry Steel Commager (in Braude, 1968: 45) observed: “Change does not necessarily assure progress, but progress implacably requires change”.

If the purpose of such missions is governed by these defining principles, they will truly be missions with the destitute. To realize this purpose helpers need to be able to empower people to become self-motivated to change. This in turn calls for an understanding of what motivates people.

4.1 Understanding what motivates people
No person can make a choice for another – if we did, we would be talking about coercion, not choice. However, as helpers we can motivate people towards different choices by means of influencing. How do we do this without forcing our agendas on the destitute, or without disrespecting their dignity and personhood?

The answer lies in identifying with the destitute while continuously trying to understand them (by means of outreach and engagement). Once trust develops between helpers and people, motivation comes into play. So, when it comes to motivation, let us try to understand the destitute. Imagine you have a dream and hopes, but your situation continuously makes it impossible to realize these dreams. You feel trapped in a poverty
that dashes dreams and hopes to pieces. Would you continue dreaming, or would you become despondent? Obviously you would feel despondent and downtrodden.

Imagine then that someone crosses your path, and introduces you to the possibility of making your dreams come true. Suddenly you start thinking differently, your despondency lifts, and hope is rekindled. You become motivated to change, to start realizing your dreams. And so the journey starts.

This represents motivating change: the process where helpers challenge destitute people to dream again, and where they try to present the destitute with opportunities and possibilities to make those dreams come true. What happens then is that destitute people become motivated (internally) to start working at realizing their own dreams.

Wessels (1989: 62) defines motivation as the power/force that drives people to specific behaviour (rather than other possible choices of behaviour). This force constitutes a variety of components, such as needs and desires, goals, cognition, self-image and the environment. These components dynamically interact to motivate the individual either positively or negatively (attracting or repelling certain behavioural patterns) in various situations, and at different times. Every individual is therefore motivated towards certain types of behaviour by a pattern unique to that person (1989:62)

In a study of motivation as a general phenomenon undertaken by Runkle, Osterholm, Hoban, McAdam, and Tull (2000:167-173), they discern the following components:

- needs and desires
- goals
- cognition
- self-image and
- the environment.

In this respect, as Wessels (1989:64) states, components of motivation interact with each other and lead to a unique motivational pattern in each individual. Likewise
McNamara (2007:1) indicates that different people exhibit different motivators. For example, some people are motivated by more money, others by more recognition, time off from work, promotions, and opportunities for learning, opportunities for socializing and relationships, etc. “Therefore, when attempting to motivate people, it's important to identify what motivates them. Ultimately, though, long-term motivation comes from people motivating themselves” (McNamara, 2007:1).

Csikszentmihalyi (2002:1) distinguishes between extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. Extrinsic motivation exists where one does things that one does not enjoy, so that one can enjoy other things afterwards. For example, a destitute person might be begging (something they don’t enjoy), in order to obtain money so that they can buy food or do something else that they do enjoy.

Intrinsic motivation is present where one does things one enjoys, primarily because one likes what one is doing. The reward is consequently in the activity itself: for instance, a destitute person learning a skill because they like doing something. Csikszentmihalyi (2002:2) contends that activities done in a team (group, community) are most likely to promote intrinsic motivation, since they are considered by participants to be the most enjoyable.

Hence it stands to reason that people can more easily be motivated to do something they enjoy, especially when they can do it together with other people.

Hanks (1991:92) adds that we must understand people’s needs if we really want to empower them to become self motivated. He expresses this in an interesting way: “You may ‘think’ you know what you ‘want’ – but fail to see the ‘need’ that drives your ‘wants!’”

In understanding what motivates destitute people from a needs perspective, basic survival must count as a strong factor that motivates their behaviour, their drive for the next bit of food, or shelter. This is the reason why destitute people will often beg (in the process losing something of their dignity). There is also a drive to connect: destitute people will often connect to other destitute persons for protection, or company, or out of
a need to belong. Entrapment in the poverty cycle must also play a role, especially when it lasts for a long time; living in poverty consequently becomes a programmed way of living, in this way becoming an underlying factor that motivates the behaviour of destitute people. The poverty cycle traps people in a way that limits them to knowing poverty as the only way to live, thereby disabling them from growing into another way of life on their own.

4.2 Understanding ways to motivate people
As McNamara (2007:1) makes clear, there are approaches to motivating people that are destructive, e.g. fear, intimidation, etc. While these approaches can seem very effective in promptly motivating people, the approaches are hurtful, and in addition, they usually only motivate one for the short-term. There are also approaches that are constructive, e.g. effective delegation, coaching, etc., which can be very effective in motivating others and over long periods of time.

4.2.1 From external motivation to intrinsic motivation: Helping people to become self motivated
Discussing motivation, Richardson and Earle (2006:13-27) distinguish three types, the first being termed external motivation and the second “intrinsic” (internal) motivation, which were noted earlier. Between these two lies a third type of motivation, “identification”. These approaches differ radically, and carry direct implications for the way in which helpers will do missions with the destitute.

External motivation uses positive incentives or negative sanctions to get people to do what one wants. It is the typical carrot and stick method (where the carrot represents incentives, and the stick represents sanctions or punishment). It forces or coerces people from outside themselves (externally) to do what one wants them to do (Richardson & Earle, 2006:14-15). It should be clear that this approach is not missions with the destitute, but rather missions to the destitute, where we force our beliefs, programmes and agendas onto the destitute by the use (or rather abuse) of things like food, shelter and clothing as incentives, or expulsion from the programme or other disciplinary measures as sanction.
Identification as a means of motivation employs identification with a group to persuade an individual to accept the standards of a group. The individual “identifies” with the group, accepts their standards, and gains the benefits of membership. This occurs when individuals feel a strong attachment to a group. They then accept the group standards not because they are strongly committed to the standard, but because they believe in the group (Richardson & Earle, 2006:15). While “identification” is a much better type of motivation than external motivation, it is insufficient in itself and must be viewed as a significant step towards the kind of motivation needed for true missions with the destitute, namely intrinsic motivation.

Intrinsic motivation requires internalization, where individuals internalize (accept as their own) group standards and regulate their own behaviour. In other words, they become self-motivated to change (Richardson & Earle, 2006: 15). In such a scenario, helpers function only as facilitators.

Note that both identification and internalization take place when people connect to a group (community). Helpers should also realize that identification usually precedes internalization; therefore mission with the destitute by the laypeople, befriending the destitute with God’s love, to connect them to a community of care, as part of our model becomes very important. If we can connect them to a community of care with which they can identify, “internalization” of the standards of the group should follow more or less spontaneously, meaning people become self-motivated to change their lives.

4.2.2 Using sources of intrinsic motivation towards self-motivation

Taking a further step, Richardson & Earle (2006: 20-26) distinguish four sources of intrinsic motivation:

4.2.2.1 Commitment to an important cause

The story is told of a man traveling in a distant country. He came upon a very large and impressive construction project. Naturally, he was curious and wanted to know what was being built. He found a man at work on the project and asked: “What is this project you’re doing?” The laborer looked at him as if he was dense and replied: “Can’t you see? I’m laying bricks.” Naturally, this didn’t satisfy the traveler’s curiosity, so he stopped another laborer, with much the same result.

246
“Can’t you see I’m building a wall?” Unwilling to let it go, he stopped a third laborer with the same question. This time, he got what he was looking for. Said the laborer with pride: “I’m building a mighty temple to my God.” (Richardson & Earle, 2006:20)

What would be an important cause for the destitute? Just to survive, or maybe to become self-sustaining or maybe something even bigger, like becoming non-destitute and then becoming part of an effort to help other people because that is what God wants?

Before we determine the answer, let us ask them, and then tap into their dreams for realizing their important causes, that is, carrying out missions with the destitute.

4.2.2.2 Feeling part of a valued group

This aspect concerns connecting to a group, and subsequently becoming loyal to that group in the process of defining the goals of “our group” together. It would seem that destitute people often seek out others (who are similarly destitute), to connect to. We seldom see the destitute on their own. Alson Ngoveni of Pretoria Community Ministries coined a term for this, namely “community of the street”: a community where destitute people form groups of their own (often only two people), in order to help and protect one another.

There is an important lesson here for helpers. If we really want to empower the destitute to become self-motivated to change, we firstly need to help them connect to groups. These might be the church community, specific small groups within that church community, or even groups formed in the shelter or project. As members of the group come to value their buddies more, they become more loyal to the goals of that group, and then begin to grow together. For instance, the goal of a group of destitute people in a shelter might become one of starting a project that reconnects members to their family, and they may start helping one another to achieve this goal; they have become part of a valued group. They have become self-motivated to improve, change, and so forth.
The second part of the lesson is that we as helpers must learn to respect and connect to their communities in a manner that will open up those communities to be empowered.

4.2.2.3 Developing ownership in something really worthwhile
When we force our ideas and goals onto people, they will want to escape from our plans at the earliest opportunity. But when a project becomes their own, filled with their ideas, driven by them, they gain ownership. Naturally people will work harder for something they consider their own than for someone else’s ideas. Once again, therefore, we should ask the destitute about the kinds of projects they wish to drive in order to improve their own lives, and subsequently helpers should facilitate the realization of these projects.

4.2.2.4 Having great expectations
This refers to developing a vision in people, while at the same time affirming that they can do it, because they possess strengths that will empower them to reach their goals (even if those strengths are sometimes hidden). When people start believing that their dreams can come true, and that they do possess the ability to make them come true, they become powerfully self-motivated.

4.2.3 Using valued strategies to help people become motivated
Freemantle’s contribution (2003:1) is to describe six key techniques which must be applied to empower people to become motivated when times are difficult. Not liking the term “techniques” (which I see as something I force onto others), I prefer to use the term “valued strategies”, by which I mean strategies that create “value” in the engagement between helpers and the destitute, where this “value” promotes self-motivation in people. These “valued strategies” are described below.

4.2.3.1 Generate and sustain hope
As long as it seems as if there is no hope, people will not be willing to make an effort for any cause, even that of becoming non-destitute.

4.2.3.2 Focus on simple short term goals
When we “overload” people with our own “big vision” too soon, they will not pursue the goal, because it will seem too huge to tackle. However, if we continuously talk to the
destitute about their own goals, and make plans with them to reach those goals step by step, they gain ownership and become self-motivated.

4.2.3.3 Encourage creativity and risk-taking
The “old, normal way” of doing things often did not work for the destitute; as a consequence helpers need to open up possibilities for creative goals where the former are able to risk trying something new. This means encouraging people to reach for their goals, even if there is risk involved and also that helpers must be creative in the way they engage the destitute.

4.2.3.4 Keep everyone involved
We have seen that people become more motivated when they are part of a valued group. Therefore helpers must engage the members of these groups all together towards projects and goals, so that they can promote motivation in one another.

4.2.3.5 Give time to people
(Especially when it comes to new ideas that require personal change.)
People, especially the destitute, often need time to think things through, and time to learn to trust the true intentions of helpers.

4.2.3.6 Listen and learn
Continuous conversation is central to empowering destitute people to become self-motivated. The helper’s role as a result becomes that of “expert listener”, so that we can “hear” their dreams, and hopes and needs, and strengths. If we do this, we should learn from the destitute, and become more competent to empower them.

4.2.4 Conclusion
Mission with the destitute becomes empowerment when helpers learn to facilitate a process whereby destitute people can become self-motivated to grow, to change, to develop, to change their own lives.

This requires that helpers connect people to valued communities and groups so that “identification” can take place. From there people could grow to become self-motivated
by means of “internalization”, which must be fostered by strategies that create “value” in the engagement between helpers and the destitute.

5 “Inside-out” missions as the healing of people’s inner pictures

When doing missions with the destitute, we will (sooner or later) be confronted with their hurts, anger, withdrawal, self-pity, or any number of other dysfunctional emotions. What then? As remarked above, destitute people have often been described as markedly mistrustful and suspicious of helpers, and as greatly valuing their autonomy (Frances & Goldfinger, 1986:579). Do we give up when confronted with anger? Do we walk away from their brokenness, or mistrust or suspicion? We cannot! Not if we want to be true to God. Rather, we must attempt to understand, so that we can help them to become whole again. This calls for “healing”, a process where we help people to heal from brokenness towards SHALOM. Much can be said about empowering destitute people to become whole again, and many “methods” can be explored. However, the “healing” dealt with here can best be assisted by using a model that works with people’s inner pictures.

In the footsteps of the work undertaken by “Perspektief Opleidingskollege”, the counseling team at Alberton Lewenssentrum developed a model for the healing of people’s inner pictures.

The model states that every human being draws “inner pictures” which represent how we feel about ourselves on the inside. These pictures are the combination of the beliefs, convictions and ideas people have about themselves, as they are formed by our own experiences and reactions to these experiences, as well as by the reactions of others towards us. The situations and physical realities we experience also contribute to the way we think about ourselves (our inner pictures), as follows:
5.1 Love, position and worth
God created every human being with a need to experience “love, position (I want to know I am important) and worth (I want to know I make a difference or mean something)”. We perpetually attempt to satisfy these needs through our relationships with other people. However, the best of these relationships will only partly be able to satisfy our need for love, position and worth (perhaps 80%, for instance), because sooner or later there is the possibility of conflict in any relationship. This is true (to a greater or lesser degree) of all our relationships. The exception is God’s relationship with us (not our relationship with God, which is often also characterized by strife). Only God can fully supply (100%) our needs for love, position and worth. Therefore, only when people understand and consequently build their personhood on who they are, for God and in God, will they be empowered to maintain an inner resolve regarding their love, position and worth, even in the face of adversity. They will feel loved, feel important (having a position) and feel they have meaning (feeling worth) – and then act accordingly.

5.2 Fear, guilty, worthless
What often happens in people’s lives (perhaps even more so in the lives of the destitute), is that we are “triggered” to feel fear, guilty or worthless on the inside, possibly by other
people (what they say and do towards us), our circumstances or situation (like the calamity of being trapped in the poverty cycle), or even by ourselves (if we engage in negative self-talk and feelings of guilt). Continuously living out of these feelings will break down people’s sense of self-worth, dignity and personhood, even to the extent where they become completely despondent and suicidal in their behaviour.

5.3 Aggressive, arrogant and self-exalted
This represents people’s reactions when they are triggered into drawing inner pictures of fear, guilt and worthlessness. These reactions might be manifested towards the inside and/ or the outside: people may either take their reaction inside by internalizing their fear etc., or they might take it outside by externalizing and lashing out. This will alter the way in which a person manifests his/ her reactions as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aggressive (anger)</th>
<th>Arrogant (“My way or the highway”)</th>
<th>Self - exalted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inside</td>
<td>withdrawal</td>
<td>quiet resistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside</td>
<td>fighting</td>
<td>domineering</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These reactions and their variations can often be found among the destitute, especially when helpers reach out and try to connect for the first time. Because many destitute people have been hurt and abused so often, they are broken down to such a degree in their personhood that they lash out or withdraw in order to try to protect themselves.

The healing of these inner pictures requires that people be introduced to God as the only “person” who gives unconditional love, position and worth. As they grow in understanding this, they become empowered towards SHALOM. The danger is that we will coerce people to accept God, but this must not happen. However, as helpers doing missions with the destitute, we do manifest a different reality, in which God plays the key role.
For helpers, the understanding of people’s inner pictures assists in three ways. Firstly, it highlights an approach that should communicate and generate inner pictures of “love, position and worth” in the lives of destitute people. Secondly, it aids helpers to understand initial negative and/or hostile reactions by destitute people towards attempts at outreach or engagement. These reactions can then be related back to inner pictures of fear, guilt and worthlessness, and then they can be dealt with constructively. A helper understanding that the anger (or arrogance, or self-exaltation) of a person she is reaching out to simply means that the person might be afraid of being abused (again) will then know that she should not be dismayed by such behaviour. Thirdly, an understanding of peoples’ inner pictures highlights the importance of helping people to see themselves as God sees them, and to view themselves in the same light (for we were made in the image of God).

6 “Inside-out” missions as the development of new beliefs
According to Wikipedia, belief is the psychological state in which an individual is convinced of the truth of a proposition. Like the related concepts truth, knowledge, and wisdom, there is no precise definition of belief on which scholars agree but, rather, numerous theories and continued debate about the nature of belief.

Bell, Halligan and Ellis (2006:1) point out that beliefs are sometimes divided into core beliefs (those which we may be actively thinking about) and dispositional beliefs (those which we may ascribe to but have never previously thought about). For example, if asked “do you believe tigers wear pink pyjamas?” a person might answer that they do not, despite the fact they may never have thought about this situation before.

Staples (1993:45) terms this the “law of conviction”, which holds that everything we believe and accept becomes part of our reality: initially of our inner reality, and when we subsequently act upon this reality, it becomes part of the reality of our life. He adds that we will more easily accept anything that correlates with our current strongest beliefs, and we will without difficulty discard anything that disagrees with those beliefs.
For instance, if a destitute person believes that he is bad (because of what he did and his current situation), he may easily discard the idea that God loves him. At the same time he might easily accept anything that confirms his belief that he is bad, such as a family member telling him he is a loser.

The last-mentioned reaction is also termed a “limiting belief” which, according to Wikipedia, is used for a belief that inhibits exploration of a wider cognitive space than would otherwise be the case. These may be strongly held conscious beliefs, or unconscious, and are often tied in with self-image or perceptions about the world. Everyday examples of limiting beliefs include:

- That one possesses specific capabilities, roles, or traits which cannot be escaped or changed.
- That one cannot succeed, so there is no point committing oneself to trying.
- That a particular opinion is right; therefore there is no point considering other viewpoints.
- That a particular action or result is the only way to resolve a problem.

New beliefs begin to develop when we are exposed to different possibilities, when we experience a shock, or when we experience something new. This leads to a desire to know more, and when extra knowledge is gained, this new knowledge is used consciously to challenge our own previously held beliefs (Roux, 2006:45).

What is the role of helpers with respect to the beliefs of the destitute? Missions with the destitute must also empower people to develop new beliefs that will challenge and negate previous limiting beliefs. Helpers can do this in two ways, namely:

1. By exposing destitute people to new possibilities and experiences (such as the possibility of housing, or the possibility of learning a skill, or studying).

Imagine a destitute person being exposed to the possibility of learning a valued skill that would ensure a sustainable job. Suddenly she may start to alter her previous belief that “poor people cannot change” into “I can change and have a
new life”. Or imagine a destitute person starting to believe that God can make it happen; it is possible to grow out of destitution!

2. By consciously facilitating a process where destitute people can come to challenge their own beliefs.

Kraybill (2003:32) uses a technique called “generating a gap” to facilitate this process. A typical example would exist where a destitute person believes that he cannot change, or that his situation cannot change. At this point the helper might ask, “What do you dream about?” As the destitute person begins to explain his (often broken) dreams, the helper could ask, “what plans can we start making to help you to grow from where you are now, to where you want to be?” From this point helpers can work with destitute people at developing viable plans and putting them into practice in order to realize those persons’ dreams. A gap is consequently created between “cannot change” and “making plans to change”. In this process people change, because they become convinced that another reality is possible. Their beliefs are challenged, and they then alter their own beliefs – from “cannot” to “let’s make plans…”

7 “Inside-out” missions as “giving voice” to individual destitute people

This concept speaks of greater consumer involvement, a process where destitute people gain a say in, and even take over, efforts at their empowerment. It overlaps considerably with the “bottom-up participation” approach in community empowerment (chapter 7), but the focus here falls on giving individual destitute people a voice.

As Glasser (2002:1) notes, “consumer involvement” in programmes and efforts that serve destitute people has become more important in recent years. A growing body of literature supports the benefits of consumer involvement on the programmatic, policy, and administrative levels. Consumer empowerment ranges from participation in a community meeting or on an advisory board, to hiring consumer staff, to completely consumer-run programmes and organizations. While “consumer involvement” may be seen as a negative term in the context of this study, this term from the social sciences does indicate the kind of relationship that often exists when helpers engage the destitute,
at least initially. However, missions with the destitute, from the underside up implies that the destitute are not only consumers, but rather co-journers that takes control of their own empowerment.

Glasser (2002:2) continues by asserting that, while there is resistance within any system to handing over power to a stigmatized group, once done, the system may discover that it displays higher quality and more responsive services. Research finds that consumers can perform as well as non-consumer staff and are especially skilled at engaging potential clients. Within consumer-run organizations, the focus of service delivery is placed on choice, dignity and respect. There are a number of things that governments and organizations can do to encourage consumer involvement in decision-making, staff hiring, and the creation and survival of consumer-run organizations.

Basic principles of “giving voice” would include:

1. Helpers must carefully plan for consumer involvement. Through allocation of adequate resources and education and preparation of non-consumer staff, helpers will be laying the groundwork for true empowerment.

2. The concept of choice and tailoring assistance to individual needs is central to the success of consumer-run programmes. It is indispensable to any programme or missionary effort that truly serves its constituents.

3. Research establishes that formerly destitute consumers employed as staff, including those with serious mental illness and persons in recovery from substance abuse, can perform as well as non-consumer staff and may be especially skilled at engaging other destitute persons in services and treatment.

4. Programmes that incorporate consumer involvement tend to be more “user-friendly” or “consumer-friendly” than those which do not.

5. Consumer-run organizations may be more able and willing to “do what it takes” to serve their clients. In practice this might mean undertaking system advocacy, offering new types of services, and/or obtaining more funding.
Everyone benefits from consumer involvement: helpers may increase the quality and effectiveness of their services; consumers become empowered through employment, advocacy and helping their peers; and clients learn the value of peer support.

Nothing makes more sense than allowing clients, or consumers of services, to have a greater say in their services, from the direct provision of these, to policy, administration and evaluation. Who, after all, knows better what they need and want but consumers themselves? Research has, indeed, demonstrated that destitute consumers are eager to define their goals and clarify their needs for support (Camardese & Youngman, 1996:51). But owing to the stigma associated with destituteness, which is greater if one happens to be mentally ill and destitute, the public and providers have exhibited a tendency to assume that consumers do not know what they need, or that what they want is not “clinically” appropriate.

Destitute people do not boast a long history of organized advocacy efforts on their own behalf. The larger self-help or consumer empowerment movement, a movement where individuals organized into groups to help one another, has come a long way since its roots years ago. But over the past decade, this movement has begun to really make its presence felt among programmes for destitute persons.

7.1 Why does “consumer involvement” matter so much?

What can happen, when providers overlook the importance of consumer input, is that many of the latter will refuse services or treatment outright owing to a lack of choices. The dehumanization and depersonalization that can occur while receiving services can make intolerable what is already a bad situation. Not only do consumers experience a lack of dignity and respect from providers, but they also feel that many of these agencies do not meet their needs. And many indeed do not. At best, traditional services tend to treat people in a regimented and impersonal manner (Howie the Harp, 1988:3). At worst, they are coercive, lacking dignity and without offering people any opportunity for self-determination (Van Tosh, 1994:5).
The phrase “treatment-resistant” is often used to describe destitute persons who refuse mental health treatment and other services. But there are often good reasons for the refusal to accept assistance. From the perspective of destitute people, the services that are offered, and in some cases forced upon them, may be completely undesirable and inappropriate. At other times they may not be sufficient.

The concept of choice is central to the success of consumer-run programmes and is an indispensable part of any programme that truly serves its clients. Consumer-run programmes have found that when these “resistors” of traditional services are offered services and choices by peer/consumer providers, in a non-coercive, voluntary environment, many of them become cooperative and eager to turn their lives around. In terms of consumer involvement providers are given a chance to increase the quality of services; consumers can step up to empowerment through employment and helping their peers; and clients can learn the value of peer support.

### 7.2 Consumers as staff

The research to date suggests that consumers can make a unique and valuable contribution as programme and agency staff. Consumers working as staff possess experiences and characteristics that enhance their ability to provide services to individuals who are destitute (Dixon, Krauss & Lehman, 1994; Solomon et al., 1994; Solomon & Draine, 1995). In *Working For a Change*, Van Tosh et al. (1993: 33-34) describe some of the unique characteristics of consumer staff, including:

- **Systems Knowledge** – Persons who are currently receiving services, or who have previously received services, are intimately familiar with many aspects of treatment, quality of care, agencies, service models, housing opportunities and other information.

- **Street Smart** – They can provide street knowledge and understand the nuances intrinsic to the outreach and engagement processes. For example, they are extremely knowledgeable about the locations where persons who are currently destitute tend to congregate.
• **Developing Alternative Approaches** – Consumer workers are amenable to the exploration of alternative service approaches because they have been destitute themselves and know how difficult it can sometimes be to access services.

• **Flexibility and Patience** – Having “been there,” consumer workers often know when flexibility and patience is called for when providing time-intensive services.

• **Responsiveness and Creativity** – Consumer workers can be creative in developing solutions based on client-expressed preferences and needs.

• **Team Work** – Consumer workers possess a keen understanding of how teamwork is needed to provide services to destitute persons with disabilities.

• **Understands Basic Needs/Preferences** – Consumer workers have been through similar experiences while destitute, and can connect with others based on their common shared experiences. They can identify with a client’s need for a shower, locating a food source and bathroom facilities, safety issues and knowledge of shelters. Though these are often not viewed as essential skills by traditional providers, workers who can help meet these basic requests foster the process of engagement.

• **Engagement/Peer Support** – Frequently, workers know persons who are destitute. They have an already established rapport that offers a key to the engagement process. Part of this rapport is a shared understanding of what it means to be destitute, and of the resulting anger, frustration and feelings of despair.

• **Positive Role Modelling** – Workers who have experienced the trauma of destituteness and are now gainfully employed bring a certain inspiration to others, especially among persons who are destitute. Being given a positive role model could promote healing and well-being. It may also raise the level of optimism toward recovery. *Positive role modelling can have an overwhelmingly positive impact on individuals, programmes and systems.*

• **Fighting Stigma** – Consumer workers represent a major force in the elimination of stigma and discrimination. Stigma in our society continues to plague the efficacy of responses to destituteness and mental illness. Stigma, in its most
virulent form, can affect the development of housing opportunities and other services required to end destituteness.

Other unique characteristics of consumer staff include the fact that consumer workers are more tolerant of unusual behaviour, do not maintain a rigid distance from the people they serve, and show more empathy for individuals’ struggles. Employing consumers as staff can increase the sensitivity of non-consumer staff to their clients, educate co-workers, help to locate hard-to-find individuals and to devise creative strategies to engage destitute persons who are resistant to services. Consumers as staff have also shown a special ability to sensitively relate to and help solve the problems clients face, identify with clients’ issues and offer coping strategies, and overcome obstacles by means of information and referral owing to their personal experience in receiving services and facing these obstacles.

But as Van Tosh et al (1993:35) warns, “Consumer involvement carries with it certain risks and must be done in a thoughtful manner. When the involvement is implemented correctly, such involvement greatly enhances the quality of services the patients receive”. Any agency which is hiring consumer staff must be adequately prepared for the commitment of doing so.

Newly hired consumer staff are faced immediately with three challenging issues: disclosure of consumer status, client-staff boundaries, and workplace discrimination (Fisk et al., 2001:19). Owing to the stigma associated with having been destitute, disclosure of consumer status to non-consumer staff and clients is an important issue for the consumer and his or her supervisor to discuss in advance. How does the consumer wish to be known? Do they want to disclose themselves or do they mind being identified by others? Disclosure must be carefully and creatively timed and will vary from one situation to the next. As a general rule, it is suggested that disclosure should not take place until the person has proven his or her ability to do the job.

Second, client-staff boundaries can constitute a source of stress for consumer staff especially if they are former clients of the agency. This change can be hard for non-
consumer staff and clinicians as well. Other difficulties include having friends who are still clients, not feeling competent enough to do the job as a former client, and other clients wanting to develop a personal relationship with the consumer staff member. Lastly, and unfortunately, it can be quite common for disclosed consumer staff to face some sort of discrimination, whether overt or subtle. Non-consumer staff have been known to treat consumer staff differently, with less respect, than other co-workers.

In order to assist the agency and consumer staff to overcome these complications, it is important that administrators actively support unit-based or agency-wide implementation of a number of concrete strategies for encouraging consumer employment. These are: (1) education and training of non-consumer staff; (2) increased individual supervision for consumer staff; and (3) paying special attention to the need to offer reasonable accommodation or otherwise modify work responsibilities to meet the needs of consumer staff with disabilities (Fisk et al., 2001:22).

7.3 Consumer-run programmes and organizations
Consumer-run programmes for destitute people offer consumers a sense of belonging and an opportunity for growth. Such programmes are empowering, offering staff and participants a wealth of information and experience, and showing participating consumers that they can function independently and with dignity. The empowerment engendered by these programmes goes beyond the staff to the people served. Such programs are often cost-effective and can provide an oversight or quality control function for the systems in which they operate (Van Tosh, 1988:4).

Because consumers have had personal experience in the service system, obtaining or trying to obtain services, when they put together their own service organization, they try hard to tailor the system to the client’s needs rather than the client’s needs to the system (Van Tosh, 1990:13). Flexibility is the key. It might mean allowing consumers the dignity to make mistakes. Instead of telling clients “no” or “we can’t do that here,” consumer-run programmes try to find creative ways to fulfill those needs.

In practice this might mean doing system advocacy, offering new types of services, or having to find specialized funding for something no one else offers.
According to Mowbray, Chamberlain, Jennings, & Reed, (1984:44), the key principles of consumer-operated organizations are as follows:

- The service must provide help with needs as defined by clients.
- Participation in the service must be completely voluntary.
- Clients must be able to choose to participate in some aspects of the service without being required to participate in others.
- Help is provided by the clients of the service to one another and may also be provided by others as selected by the clients. The ability to give help is seen as a human attribute and not something acquired by education or a professional degree.
- The overall direction of the service, including responsibility for financial and policy decisions, lies in the hands of the service recipients.
- The responsibility of the service is to the client, and not to relatives, other providers or funding agencies. Information about the client must not be transmitted to any other party without the consent of the client, and such information must be available to the client.

These principles demonstrate a great sensitivity to the issue of consumer control, an important issue for people who, while destitute, enjoyed no control over such basic decisions as where they were going to sleep, what they were going to eat, or when they could take a shower (Long & Van Tosh, 1988:7).

### 7.4 Conclusion

Consumer-run organizations will face considerable barriers when entering the human services field. Many of these barriers are faced by all programmes for destitute persons, but they may be made even more difficult due to public scepticism concerning the ability of consumers to operate programmes. One of the most common difficulties is finding a location for consumer-run programmes in the face of resistance and stigma from the surrounding community. Communities do not want those “crazies” or “bums” in their neighbourhood. Unfortunately, the “not in my backyard” syndrome is still with us when
it comes to people who are destitute. But when communities discover that former clients will be running the programme as well, community resistance may grow even stronger.

However, the potential benefits far outweigh the difficulties of implementation.

8 Fostering helpers’ competencies in order to promote empowering “inside-out” missions

As helpers engage destitute people, mutual influencing takes place. Egan (1994:59) calls this a two-edged sword, adding: “It is not possible for helpers to avoid influencing their clients (or being influenced by them), any more than it is possible to eliminate social influence as a part of everyday life. We are constantly influencing one another in many different ways.”

Driscoll (1984: 5) puts this well, observing that the “obvious objective of helping is not merely to understand, but to benefit troubled persons”. The emphasis therefore falls on influence, and on the concepts, understanding, procedures and competencies used to generate changes. But the main point, according to Egan (1994:60), is that helpers can influence clients without robbing them of self responsibility (or dignity, or personhood).

How? By making sure that helpers adhere to and practise good values when engaging people in order to help them.

8.1 Building competency on strong values

Values have always been important in the helping process (Bergin, 1991; Beutler & Bergan, 1991; Kerr & Erb, 1991; Wogan & Norcross, 1987). It is clear that the helpers’ values influence their clients’ values over the course of the helping process (and sometimes even vice versa) (Vachon & Agresti, 1992:511). As Egan (1994:49) indicates, values are not just ideals. “In the pragmatics of helping others, values are a set of criteria for making decisions. This is true of helpers and of clients as they grapple with problems and opportunities”.

263
Egan identifies five main groups of values that should be fostered when helpers engage destitute people from the inside-out:

### 8.1.1 Pragmatism: whatever is ethical and works

Ethics and morals are considered to be very important in helping (Pope & Vasquez, 1991:47). For Egan (1994:49) an ethical and humane pragmatism can be expressed in a variety of ways:

1. Maintaining a real life focus – The focus of helping must be placed on empowering the clients to manage their day to day lives more effectively.
2. Staying flexible – The entire process of helping has to be adapted to the condition and needs of the client.
4. Doing only what is necessary.
5. Being realistic – All problems cannot be “solved” and change doesn’t occur overnight.

### 8.1.2 Competence: adding value

According to Egan (1994:51), studies show that competent helpers do help; they directly add value to the client’s own programme for constructive change and indirectly add value to the client’s life.

He considers that competence includes the following norms:

1. Becoming good at helping
2. Continuing to learn
3. Practising what one preaches
4. Being assertive. “If you are good at what you do, don’t apologize for it. Do it!” (1994: 51)
5. Finding competence, not in behaviour, but in outcomes.
8.1.3 Respect: valuing diversity and individuality
Egan (1994:51) defines respect as “a particular way of viewing oneself and others”, “as prizing people simply because they are human”. This obviously has a bearing on dignity. He proceeds to make a case for building respect on two foundations, namely:

8.1.3.1 Understand and value diversity
Helpers differ from their clients in any number of ways. Therefore, understanding and valuing diversity is critical to effective helping.

Sue, Arrendondo and McDavis (1992:478-483) outlined the multi-cultural values, working knowledge and skills needed by helpers in three broad areas:

- The helpers’ awareness of their own cultural values and biases
- Their understanding of the world view of their clients
- Their ability to use culturally appropriate intervention strategies.

8.1.3.2 Understanding and valuing the individual
Helpers mostly interact with clients as individuals (from the inside-out). Therefore, the client’s specific expression of her culture, assumptions, beliefs, values etc. becomes important. Egan (1994:52) consequently develops a set of norms for the engagement of individual people:

1. Do no harm
2. Appreciate diversity (and learn from it)
3. Treat clients as individuals
4. Suspend critical judgement (help clients, don’t judge them)
5. Make it clear that one is there for the client
6. Be available
7. Assume the client’s goodwill
8. Be warm within reason
9. Keep the client’s agenda in focus
10. Help clients through their pain.
8.1.3.3 Genuineness: beyond professionalism and phoniness
This concept refers to a set of attitudes and a set of behaviours. Genuine people are at home with themselves and therefore can comfortably be themselves in all interactions. According to Egan (1994:53), being genuine means doing some things, and not doing others:
1. Do not overemphasize the helping role
2. Be spontaneous
3. Avoid defensiveness
4. Be open.
In this respect Miller & Lin (1988:73-75) considers that “the social responsibilities of psychologists can best be discharged by learning how to help people to help themselves”.

8.1.3.4 Clients’ self-responsibility: non-patronizing empowerment
Egan (1994:53), using insights from Farelly and Brandsma (1974), outlines a number of hypotheses in this regard:
1. Start with the premise that clients can change if they choose to
2. Help clients to see helping sessions as work sessions
3. Help clients to discover and use their own resources (a strength–based attitude)
4. Do not overrate the psychological fragility of clients
5. Help clients turn self-dissatisfaction into a lever for change.

8.2 Building competency on learned skills
Erickson and Page (1998:3), drawing from other authors, identify certain principles that must become learned skills which will enable helpers to improve their own competencies as helpers. These skills are critical because successful engagement will largely be determined by the relationship between clients and helpers. While they apply more to formal engagement with the destitute by professional helpers, and not as much to informal engagement by laypersons (the “whole people of God”), these skills should apply to any helper wanting to do missions with the destitute. They include:

- Good judgment, intuition and street sense: this includes safety for themselves and the client – being observant and vigilant, as well as using good common sense. Strategies include going out with a partner, avoiding closed, remote or dangerous
areas, developing a relationship with local police (Winarski, 1998), carrying a cellular phone, dressing appropriately, and assessing situations before acting.

- Non-judgmental attitude (ICH, 1991): regardless of the worker's personal beliefs, no behaviour on the part of the client is morally judged.

- Being a team player: helpers must know when to ask for help, from receiving backup on the streets to obtaining a second opinion in clinical assessments. Outreach staff must display a strong commitment to the "team" approach to service delivery (Axelroad, 1987; Wobido et al., 1990).

- Flexibility (Rosnow, 1988; ICH, 1991): Outreach helpers are flexible in reassessing daily work priorities, in setting work schedules, in the treatment planning process (Morse, 1987), and in its content.

- Realistic expectations: Helpers have an "expectation of non-results." They understand that they will not be able to "cure" or "save" clients (Axelroad, 1987; ICH, 1991), yet at the same time must continue to persevere.

- Commitment: helpers should be both consistent and persistent in their dealings with clients (Axelroad, 1987; Wobido et al, 1990). They do what they say they are going to do and only make promises they can keep. They are in it "for the long haul".

- Less is more. At the outset of intervention, there is less application of intensive and costly treatment, less professional dist ancing, less rigidity, less intrusiveness, and less directiveness (Rosnow, 1988). Services offered are purely voluntary (Cohen, 1989).

- Altruism: Staff find rewards in doing outreach work, such as a spiritual commitment to helping others, furthering an academic interest, or simply enjoying the process of working with individuals (Axelroad, 1987).

- Sense of humour: the ability to use humour at appropriate times, as well as maintaining a sense of humour during difficult times, is essential.

- Creativity and resourcefulness are strengths that helpers tap into daily.

- Cultural competency: Helpers demonstrate competence across ethnicity, gender, transgender, lifestyle, and age spectrums.
• Resilience: Helpers are resilient and patient in a work environment marked by high turnover, difficulty in tracking clients (McQuistion, et al., 1996), high stress, lack of resources, and lack of immediate improvement in the clients they serve. Effective helpers are able to continue working despite the difficulties endured by their clients, without personalizing them, meaning without taking these difficulties personally.

8.3 Improving competency by dealing with biases

All helpers display biases and hold viewpoints. As Meyers (1999:58) puts it: “We view the poor from a point of view, as Christians, as development professionals, as urban folk, in terms of our personalities, and in terms of the culture from which we come”. Against this background, he advocates that “we need to make our assumptions more explicit, and to ask God’s help to see the poor and the circumstances of the poor more truly”.

According to Samuel (1995:153) helpers are “shaped by a particular understanding of progress, health, modern education, family life, democracy, participation, decision making, market reality, economic principles and practices”. In this respect Chambers (1997:78-83) identifies four particular areas of concern with respect to helpers’ biases, especially among specialized professional helpers engaging the destitute:

8.3.1 Conditioning

We are all conditioned human beings; the temptation is to transfer our view of how things work and what will make things better onto others (especially when we are specialized professionals who have studied, and therefore “know how it works”). Needless to say, these kinds of temptations should consciously be guarded against.

8.3.2 The desire to dominate

Most people exhibit a desire (at least to a degree) to feel superior and dominate over others. This behaviour may form part of their personality as well as their culture. The facts that helpers can read, express themselves clearly when speaking, can write, can arrive in a car or on a motorcycle, ask for a meeting with important people and then be granted it, all indicate a position of power and privilege (as opposed to the destitute), that helpers often use to unwittingly dominate.
8.3.3 Distance
Helpers often operate “from a distance”, geographically and psychologically. When we are with the poor, we are “in the field”, but our offices are usually somewhere else, where we have access to everything we need to perform the task. In addition, the differences in language, customs, food and ways of problem solving all serve to create distance.

8.3.4 Denial
When the real world of the poor conflicts with who we are or how we are trained or what we believe, the reaction is often denial. We simply reframe or change the experience or our understanding to fit into our own frameworks. Hence helpers remain untroubled and unchanged, leaving the poor to adapt to them.

8.4 Greater competency for all helpers engaging the destitute
Consequently a combination of strong values, learned skills and conscious testing of their own personal biases that are constantly fostered should improve helpers’ competencies considerably. Of course, one would expect a greater measure of learned skills and adherence to values among professionals engaging the destitute, but the “whole people of God” also need to grow in competency when it comes to missions with the destitute. Helpers engaging “haphazardly” in missions with the destitute, without realizing the complexity and challenges of the issues they will be confronted with, will soon be discouraged, or may even (in their ignorance) cause damage to already damaged people.

9 Conclusion
Missions with the destitute from the inside-out utilize strategies that empower destitute people internally, so that they will become stronger and be able to handle external challenges better. Such missions will reach out to individual destitute people, with the idea of “connecting” (forming trusting relationships), in order that helpers can consequently engage the destitute in ways that empower them to become non-destitute, or to grow in SHALOM. However, these missions should not coerce change, but should, rather, empower people to become self-motivated to change. Such missions will understand personal brokenness in destitute people, and will attempt to facilitate “healing” of such brokenness in non-directive ways. Part of the purpose of missions with
the destitute is therefore to understand the role of “beliefs” and “limiting beliefs” in the lives of people, so that destitute people can be challenged towards, and empowered through the fostering of, new beliefs.

Lastly, meaningful missions with the destitute (that do not harm people) call for the fostering of helpers’ competencies in order to promote and facilitate empowering “inside-out” missions.
Chapter 7  
Missions with the Destitute from the Outside-in  

This chapter explores strategies and interventions that should empower destitute people by creating an external environment or situation that could enable them to grow, change, develop and become whole as they choose to. Missions with the destitute from the “outside-in” deals with issues mostly outside of the direct control of destitute people, therefore “external” to them: such as access to housing, or clinical services, or access to empowering communities, or advocating social justice and a number of other issues. These issues are sometimes also called “structural” or “societal factors” contributing to destitution.

1 Introduction  
Richardson & Earle (2006:31), in discussing motivation, make it clear that “our inner motivation is greatly influenced by forces in our external social environment”. This is very true of destitution.

The words of a service provider spell out the plight of the destitute (in terms of external issues and forces at work) very effectively:

She never in her life could save that kind of money that she needs to get back on her feet, and she has no skills to be able to market herself to be able to make more money in that sort of situation. So what happens is that she is stuck in that cycle until somebody intervenes with authority, like the way we are trying to get help with suitable housing that will be subsidized. Unless somebody steps in to do that she’s always going to be in that sort of place where she is cycling around and that doesn’t change her desire, it doesn’t change what she wants. She dreams of the same things all of the rest of us dream, which is going some place in the evening and being able to get into a warm bed or to a place where the rain is not going to hit you on the head; or where somebody is not going to rape you because you are outside, or any of the other things that she has to deal with having to live outside. It makes perfect sense to me when I think of the scenario how easily she could become discouraged. It makes sense to me that the woman goes out and does drugs (Meschede, 2004:3).
Regarding destitution, it is nearly impossible to discover exact and specific answers for every single “external” factor contributing to this state, firstly because of the variety of factors involved, and secondly because of the dynamically interactive nature of all the factors (both internal and external) that are involved. Therefore this chapter focuses on interventions and strategies that could empower destitute people by creating an external environment or situation that will enable them to grow, change, develop and become whole as they choose to.

I appreciate the way in which CHAM describe its activities as an organization on the front page of its website (CHAM2006): it clearly depicts an approach to missions that is faith-based, that integrates sharing faith and meeting social needs, and that engages both internal and external issues contributing to destitution:

CHAM's work consists of three parts: service, ministry and advocacy. These aspects of CHAM are built around the Gospel Principles of love, forgiveness, justice, compassion and repentance. Through CHAM’s understanding of, and adherence to all the aspects of Jesus’ ministry, CHAM seeks the eradication of all forms of injustice and oppression and ultimately seeks the full presence of the Kingdom of God. Our ministry is structured to empower the powerless, give a voice to the voiceless, and has room for all people from all faith backgrounds to join together in creating equality, justice and hope. CHAM praises, preaches, teaches, prays, empowers, nurtures and heals; at the same time we march, demonstrate, strategize, advocate, unite, outreach and proclaim justice--these are all interwoven in the full Gospel that Jesus taught. CHAM knows that with God all things are possible and we see miracles happen everyday because CHAM "walks by faith, not by sight."

It would seem that missions from the outside-in can be divided roughly into two categories, namely (1) social services and (2) community development approaches. However, one should be aware that these two categories overlap.

Clinical services are understood to denote social services in their many forms. In this regard such services will operate from “outside” to help people become physically healthy and able to access housing etc., in this way reconnecting them to communities of care. These communities may display many faces, but they will be social places that care for people in some way, therefore improving their lives.
Community development approaches would then focus more on the strengthening of communities, so that these communities would truly be able to empower their members not to be destitute, but to grow towards SHALOM.

Even though outside-in missions are divided into two categories, there is an obvious overlap between these two categories, where the one makes possible the other. Clinical services, for instance, will often strive to reconnect people to communities, while a community of care will in turn improve access to various clinical services.

Following in the footsteps of pioneer ministry organizations such as CHAM, and other helpers like this body, missions from the “outside-in” can be fleshed out along the lines of clinical services and community development.

2 Some principles for missions from the “outside-in”
The principles at work when one considers missions with the destitute from the outside-in should be defined at this point.

2.1 Missions from the “outside-in” must reconnect destitute people
As Rog & Holupka (2001:1) observe, destitute people are, by definition, isolated from mainstream society. They lack stable housing, and often lack connections with jobs, families, and communities. Once again, “reconnecting” is both an internal and external issue. Casey (2002:1) points out that:

Helping someone to rebuild relationships with family or friends, stay in education or take up training and employment and deal with a drug, alcohol or mental health problem, is as much about tackling homelessness as ensuring a roof over their head.

In addition to being without housing, destitute people are often unattached to mainstream society in terms of a number of other dimensions, including employment, health care, and connections with family, friends, and the broader community (Wright, Rubin, & Devine, 1998:1-7). This reminds us of Friedman’s (1992) discussion of marginalization.
Against this background, reconnecting destitute people to housing, employment, families, communities, health services and whatever else is necessary, becomes important. Recent approaches at reconnection has started to focus on both individual issues that contribute to destitution (inside out missions) while also intervening in the broader system, attempting to improve more systemic issues, such as increasing the affordability of housing or developing more employment opportunities (outside-in missions) (Rog & Holupka, 2001:2).

The “community” aspect of reconnecting needs to be explored in greater depth. The best way to explain the concept of community in the context of this study is perhaps as follows: a group or fellowship of people sharing the same origin, interests, or goal, or the community of interest in which a person currently lives (Merriam Webster OnLine dictionary, Enhanced Strongs Lexicon 1995: 56). At any given time, a person functions within a community, however loosely (as a loner) or strongly. In the Christian community, fellowship is best described by the words “brotherly love/ sisterly love”: this is to be the defining character of the Christian community (Vines 1981: Logos Search). The church may be termed such a community of care.

In this study, the denotation of the term is primarily that of the “group” in which a person functions, or from which she originates, or to which she is going.

As I suggested earlier, I still struggle to decide whether the destitute constitute a community. At the most we can term them “the community of the street”, a community loosely made up of “nomadic” individuals who roam the streets together in order to be able to survive better. However, if we do decide to call them a community in their own right, it must be understood that the term refers very broadly to a very loose community, a community whose members change often and constantly.

Rather, in terms of this study, I perceive community as an integral part of effective missions with the destitute, because the SHALOM that we envision for people is a community concept (Chapter 3), and can only be fully realized in relationships. By
this statement I do not refer to the possible “community of the street” referred to above, but to a social group living in a social space (place) into which the destitute must be inserted/ re-inserted in order really to experience SHALOM. This implies various possible communities with which the destitute can be reconnected, such as:

1. Their communities of origin (if they still exist, or are still functioning, or are not too dysfunctional)
2. Existing communities
3. Newly-formed communities (for example the community of women at “The Potter’s House”, a project of PCM).

2.2 Missions from the outside-in must promote advocacy

Although this aspect has already been addressed, it needs to be reiterated: the destitute can be served through a helper’s advocacy. The simple premise is that helpers often enjoy access to power structures that the destitute simply do not possess, for a number of reasons. That means helpers must advocate for better services, better government involvement, better social systems and structures, and eventually for improved social justice. In a sense helpers become emissaries of the destitute, to fight for them where they cannot go.

Yet, as argued above, one cannot stop here. Through community empowerment efforts the destitute must be empowered to find their own voices, to drive their own advocacy. Only then has real empowerment taken place.

2.3 Missions from the outside-in must be holistic and comprehensive

To be comprehensive and holistic, “outside-in” missions must aim to address as many of the external factors and internal factors discussed in chapter 6 as possible, and even deal with new issues as they arise.

2.4 Missions from the outside-in must take place along a continuum of care

Helpers’ efforts to empower destitute people should be loosely directed along a “continuum of care”, without ever forgetting that destitute people should determine their
own specific agendas. The “continuum of care” simply functions on the premise that there is a loose kind of chronology in our efforts to empower destitute people; for instance, outreach and engagement will usually occur before reconnecting people to communities of care, and building trust usually precedes fostering reconnection to employment.

2.5 **Missions from the outside-in must be strength based**

This principle understands, respects and utilizes the fact that destitute people also possess strengths (or assets in the case of community empowerment), which they can contribute. Missions from the outside-in focus not on employing these strengths to empower individual destitute people (which is more the domain of missions from the inside-out, investigated in chapter 6), but on using the strengths of individuals as assets to empower the communities those people become part of or belong to. These strengths consequently become “community assets”, where the community uses them to empower itself, in order to benefit every individual member.

2.6 **Missions from the outside-in must generate hope for a better future, and then realize it**

Meyers (1999:14) states that “The best of human futures lies in the direction of the kingdom of God and Jesus Christ as the person who offers the way to become part of God’s kingdom”. For helpers doing missions with the destitute, they start here, but do not stop at this point. Missions with the destitute discover God’s possibilities for seemingly hopeless situations, and then work actively towards making those possibilities a reality. Such missions should always strive to realize a greater measure of SHALOM in people’s lives.

2.7 **Outside-in missions must promote the means to “responsible well-being”**

“Responsible well-being” is a term used by Chambers (1997:10) to describe quality of life; its opposite is ill-being. It obviously echoes the meaning of the word SHALOM. For Chambers, the objective of empowerment is responsible wellbeing for all; he argues that two aspects are fundamental in this respect, namely (1) livelihood security and (2) capabilities by which livelihood security and responsible well-being are achieved.
He defines livelihood security as consisting of “adequate stocks and flows of food and cash to meet basic needs and to support well being. Security refers to secure rights and reliable access to resources, food, income and basic services. It includes tangible and intangible assets to offset risk, ease shocks and meet contingencies” (1997:10). Capabilities signify that people are as well as they can do (or are empowered to do). Capabilities are enlarged “through learning, practice, training and education”, with the outcome being “better living and well being” (1997:11).

2.8 “Outside-in” missions must help in ways that do no harm

Slim (1997:1) alerts us to the “dark side (of humanitarian action) that compromises as well as helps the people whose suffering it seeks to assuage”, while Anderson (1999:5) has articulated a serious of actions that may result in harm if helpers are not careful as to how and when they undertake activities:

1. Introducing resources into resource-scarce environments can increase competition and suspicion.
2. Adding to the overall resources of an area frees local resources to be used for other things, like further economic exploitation or even violence.
3. Providing assistance can severely distort local economic activities and reduce incomes and employment opportunities.
4. Operating through existing political structures, formal and informal, in order to gain access or permission, buttresses such structures and may prolong their malfeasance, corruption or role in conflict.
5. Offering specific aid to specific groups within a community to the exclusion of others exacerbates tensions and competition.

The point made by the examples above should be clear: helpers must always bear in mind the possible consequences of their actions, so that they can learn to help in ways that do no harm.
2.9 “Outside-in” missions must combat marginalization by enlarging social power

The destitute as marginalized people have already been described in chapter 4. However, marginalization needs to be combated by enlarging people’s social power, which calls for “outside-in” missions. According to Friedman (1992:164) empowerment that enlarges social power “includes an emphasis on local decision making, local self reliance, participatory democracy, and social learning. It also pursues the transcendent goals of inclusive democracy, appropriate economic growth, gender equality and sustainability”.

Recalling the eight bases for enlarging social power (together with the added bases of cultural values and spirituality named in chapter 4), Friedman’s view of transformation calls for working with the household (community) so that it is empowered to increase the envelope of its social power – the transformational frontier – outward along the 10 lines of social power by building, empowering, and nurturing social networks and social organizations.

“Social networks” could include family, friends and neighbours, while social organizations will include the formal and informal groups to which people (and the household/ community) belong, including churches, sports clubs, mothers’ clubs, neighbourhood improvement associations, credit circles, discussion clubs, tenant organizations etc (Friedman, 1992:68).

His model can be illustrated as follows:
Transformation as expanding the frontiers of social power  
(Adapted from Friedman, 1992:67)

In terms of missions with the destitute, Friedman’s perspective with respect to empowering households out of marginalization, through the “transformational frontier” and into enlarged social power, by using social networks and social organizations, is very helpful. Where he uses the term “households”, the terms “destitute people” and “communities” in the context of this study can also be employed.

Outside-in missions that combat marginalization and enlarge social power would then take the form of the empowerment of individual destitute people to gain access to social power, or to become connected to communities where they can gain such access, by linking people to social networks and social organizations, which also accords such
empowerment a strong “community” flavour. As such it overlaps strongly with “reconnecting” and “community”, aspects of outside-in missions addressed above.

3 “Outside-in” missions as the provision of social services
Social services refer to the provision of a number of different, but interacting, services, including medical services, reconnecting people to housing and fostering residential stability, and to employment.

3.1 “Outside-in” missions as the connecting of destitute people to clinical services
Destitute people often become ill, which is usually something outside of their control. Against this background, helpers should be able to connect destitute people to health services. Those who experience destituteness are subject to conditions that can result in deterioration of health or which exacerbate existing chronic or acute illnesses, leading to rates of illness and injury from two to six times higher than for people who are housed (Wright, 1990a:55).

Three premises are evident here. Firstly, no helpers can provide all the services often required to empower destitute people, because of the fact that destitution is a complex problem. Secondly, some issues associated with destitution, such as health problems or substance abuse, require intervention by specialized professionals. Therefore, helpers should be able to “map” the array of services often required that is available in their vicinity, so that they can connect people to these services. Thirdly, “connecting” does not merely mean “referring”. Connecting carries with it the meaning of reaching out and engaging destitute people, and only then (if they agree) can helpers take them by the hand and physically lead them to the necessary services. Referring is usually unsuccessful, because the destitute person still feels unsure, but if he trusts the helper, he may allow the helper to connect him.

3.1.1 Problems with health care for destitute people
Destitution severely complicates the delivery of health services (Walker, 1989:20). Without access to appropriate health care, acute and chronic health problems may go
untreated, creating medical complications in multiple co-occurring conditions and ultimately impeding the individual’s ability to overcome destituteness. If we fail to provide destitute people with health care of a standard that is available to other people, even when they need elaborate or expensive treatments, this constitutes a form of discrimination that should be unacceptable in a democratic society (Bangsberg et al., 1997:67).

Destitute people are part of a heterogeneous group with multiple and complex needs, so that numerous personal and societal factors outside the clinicians’ control may therefore affect the final outcomes for individual patients. Also, their mobility often makes it difficult to track destitute people for follow-up measures” (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1996: ii).

A central question is to determine what qualifies as a “successful outcome”. In this respect healthcare practitioners working with destitute people are concerned with improving health status, level of functioning and quality of life.

Chronic conditions—especially substance abuse and mental illness—are subject to regressions and relapse. This result should be expected and needs to be built into planning of programmes, as well as into outcome evaluation methodologies.

3.1.2 What are the health problems of destitute people?
As a consequence of the poor nutrition, lack of adequate hygiene, exposure to violence and to the elements, increased contact with communicable diseases, and fatigue that accompany the conditions of destituteness, destitute people suffer from ill health much more frequently than the non-destitute. Several studies have found that one-third to one-half of destitute adults display some form of physical illness (Bassuk & Rosenberg, 1988; Burt & Cohen, 1989; Gelberg & Linn, 1989; Morse & Calsyn, 1986; Roth & Bean, 1986). At least half of destitute children are physically ill (Wood et al., 1990:860) and they are twice as likely as other children to suffer such illnesses (Wright & Weber, 1987:24). This lack of health takes its toll by preventing many destitute people from escaping from destitution. For example, one-quarter of destitute adults reported that their
poor health prevented them from working or attending school (Robertson & Cousineau, 1986:561). Even more seriously, rates of mortality are three to four times higher in the destitute population than they are in the general population (Hanzlick & Parrish, 1993:488-491; Hibbs et al., 1994:305; Wright & Weber, 1987:18).

The most common physical illnesses among destitute people include upper respiratory tract infections, trauma, female genitourinary problems, hypertension, skin and ear disorders, gastrointestinal diseases, peripheral vascular disease, musculoskeletal problems, dental conditions, and difficulties with vision (Wright & Weber, 1987:19; Reuler et al., 1986:1131-1134; Miller & Lin, 1988:668-673). Inadequate immunization, while not a physical illness, reflects the lack of preventive health care in this population (Alperstein et al., 1988:1232-1233; Miller & Lin, 1988:669). However, the two health conditions most likely to trap people in a state of chronic destituteness are those of substance abuse disorders and mental illness.

Health problems in these three domains—physical illness, mental illness and substance abuse disorders—are intimately related. For example, surveys of the health status of destitute people demonstrate repeatedly that the single most common disorder is substance abuse. This in turn contributes to a wide range of other health problems resulting from self-neglect and poor hygiene, nutritional deficiencies, trauma, exposure, accidents, victimization, toxic effects of ingested substances (e.g., hepatic cirrhosis due to alcohol) and infections (e.g., bacterial endocarditis, hepatitis and HIV infection). Studies also indicate the poor general health status of severely mentally ill destitute people. They are more prone to neglect personal hygiene and their basic health care needs, and to be poorly nourished. Seriously mentally ill destitute people have been found to be at higher risk for tuberculosis (Sakai et al., 1998:346) and HIV infections (Susser et al., 1993:568).

Another example of the way in which many of these problems overlap is evident in the area of impairment of physical function. Despite their young age (mean age in the mid 30's), half of the destitute adults surveyed state that they are limited in performing vigorous physical activities (Gelberg, Linn & Mayer-Oakes, 1990:1221).
Based on the broad scope of health problems described above, it is clear that a full array of services must be made available and accessible for people who are destitute. Otherwise, the care might easily revert into “Band-Aid medicine” and miss underlying or co-occurring conditions. Such adapting of clinical practices should cover elements of health care encounters common to medical, mental health or substance abuse services, including: intake and assessment; clinical preventive services; diagnosis; referrals for specialty and inpatient care; linkages to non-health services; and follow-up to ensure continuity of care. It is important to remember that these elements may not necessarily occur in this order, or be provided in a typical clinical setting.

3.1.3 Ways to overcome “access barriers” to health services
Compounding the increased risk for illness or injury, there is evidence that destitute people encounter major obstacles to obtaining needed medical and psychiatric services. The majority of destitute adults state that they did not obtain necessary medical care in the previous year (Gelberg, Linn & Rosenberg, 1988:168; Robertson and Cousineau, 1986:562). Even among those with a chronic medical condition, half had not seen a doctor within the previous year (Robertson, Ropers and Boyer, 1985:14). Organizations providing services to destitute people have described numerous difficulties in accessing substance abuse treatment for their clients (Williams, 1992:122).

Some of the barriers to access to health services are related to external factors such as lack of transportation (Robertson & Cousineau, 1986:563). Others are internal, for example, denial of existence of a health problem, lack of awareness of available services, or active avoidance due to fear or distrust of large institutions. Because an exhibition of toughness is necessary in order to survive on the streets, destitute people may at times deny that they suffer from health difficulties in an attempt to maintain a sense of their own endurance. People with substance abuse disorders or mental illness may deny experiencing a problem or be unaware of its severity.

Even when aware of their problem and of available services, many destitute people are distrustful of any offers of help, owing to previous negative experiences with
the health care and social services systems. They may be too embarrassed to allow medical professionals to see them in a condition of poor personal hygiene. Or they may avoid seeking health care because of the fear of having their meagre financial resources taken away to pay for the services they receive, or fear of authority figures (Stark, 1992:44), including immigration authorities, child protective service workers (amongst runaway teenagers and destitute women with children), and police (amongst drug abusers or ex-convicts) (Jahiel, 1992:231).

Against this background helpers should advocate and work for health services that are easier to access. This can be brought about in a number of ways:

3.1.3.1 **By making it easier to reach service delivery locations**
Either by using mobile services that go out on the street, or by making sure that service locations are close by (Cousineau et al., 1995:87).

3.1.3.2 **By scheduling services at times that would be most convenient for destitute people**
They often experience trouble in keeping appointments owing to competing priorities for survival, such as finding day labour, a free meal or a shelter bed for the night (Gelberg, Gallagher, Andersen & Koegel, 1997:218), and they do not enjoy access to telephones so as to change appointments. Scheduling services in the early morning or evening, while people are still at the shelter, would make a difference.

3.1.3.3 **By helping with financial barriers to services**
Either by providing free services or heavily subsidizing these in a way that would also allow those with no money or means to obtain them (Cohen, Teresi & Holmes, 1988:127).

3.1.3.4 **By improving “cultural competence”**
This denotes a positive, open attitude of being culturally sensitive, firstly by respecting the “culture” of being destitute, and secondly by respecting other cultural differences such as race or language.
3.1.3.5 By dealing positively with “disruptive behaviour”
This refers to destitute people with histories of disruptive behaviour who are often barred from services. Helpers should continually assess the nature of such behaviour: is the person acting out because of a mental illness beyond his or her control, or are the actions intentional and meant to do harm? Against this background a delicate balance must be maintained.

3.1.3.6 By using “multi-disciplinary” teams
Health services must not be “singly focussed” (for instance only providing dental care), but should be integrated with other services. In other words, a number of different kinds of services are needed, which calls for multi-disciplinary teams (Burness et al., 1990:131).

3.1.3.7 Conclusion
Providers of health care need to be aware of all of these potential barriers, making adaptations as necessary and paying special attention to the characteristics of the population they are serving.

Nine general principles have emerged as lessons for practitioners involved in providing care for destitute people:

1. The importance of outreach in order to engage clients in treatment.
2. Respect for the individuality of each person.
3. Cultivation of trust and rapport between service provider and client.
4. Flexibility in service provision, including location and hours of service, as well as flexibility in treatment approaches.
5. The need to attend to the basic survival needs of destitute people and to recognize that until those needs are met, health care may not be an individual’s priority.
6. The importance of integrated service provision and case management to coordinate the needed services.
7. Clinical expertise to address complex clinical problems, including access to specialized care.
8. Need for a range of housing options, including programmes combining housing with services.

9. A longitudinal perspective that ensures continuing care until the person’s life situation is stabilized.

Despite the knowledge and experience that has been gained from the past in adapting clinical practice to the needs of destitute people, there is still much to be learned; numerous threats also challenge the successful practice of health care for the destitute. I am not a medical practitioner; however, literature study, as well as personal experiences and discussions with relevant health care practitioners, have led me to the above insights.

3.2 “Outside-in” missions as the fostering of residential stability

Rossi (1989:13) notes: “what is striking is that destituteness today is a more severe condition of housing deprivation than in decades past”. In the past, those who were considered destitute were able to find some shelter in flophouses, SROs, or cubicle hotels. By contrast, many destitute people today are apt to be found in public places (such as building lobbies or train stations), shelters, or on the street (Rog & Halupka, 1998:5).

Much has been learned in recent years about how to reconnect destitute people with housing. For instance, PCM in Pretoria undertakes a strong drive to reconnect people to housing, with exemplary successes. Outreach and engagement efforts are sometimes critical in beginning the reconnection process, especially for individuals who have been destitute for long periods of time and are experiencing severe mental illness and/or chronic substance abuse (Barrow, Hellman, Lovell, Plapinger, & Struening, 1991:35).

Developing trust by means of efforts such as the provision of food and clothing, over long periods of time, often represents the key to a person’s transition from destituteness to housing, as was discussed under “outreach and engagement” (Chapter 6).
3.2.1 Fostering residential stability requires the availability of different housing options

Moving people off the streets and out of shelters, and keeping them in the community, requires that various housing options be made available to meet their different shelter and support needs.

3.2.1.1 Supportive housing: housing combined with services

Housing combined with services characterizes many of the interventions that have been developed and tested to improve residential stability, particularly for individuals with specific needs, such as mental health problems or substance abuse issues (Fosburg, Locke, Peck, & Finkel, 1997; Emerson & Twersky, 1996).

The term “supportive housing” is used broadly in order to define housing designed to help individuals reduce their need for more restrictive services and remain residentially stable, and in turn improve their quality of life and functioning (Newman, 1992:4).

Supportive housing (also called services-enriched housing and special needs housing) describes a wide range of housing interventions. For example, supportive housing can be transitional or permanent. Transitional housing typically takes the form of congregated housing with considerable services and supports provided on-site where a person can live a for predetermined period of time. Permanent supportive housing sets no time limits, and typically includes access to services available in the community. Permanent housing options include single room occupancy (SRO) hotels, multi- and single-family rental housing, scattered-site apartments, and even home ownership. Community differences in the housing stock, together with the funding that may be available, often result in differences in the types of supportive housing that are developed.

In supportive housing, housing is combined with access to services and supports in order to address the needs of destitute individuals so that they may live independently in the community rather than on the street or in institutional settings such as mental
institutions, jails, shelters and hospitals. Supportive housing is generally considered an option for individuals or families who have either lived on the streets or shelters for long periods of time and/or who have needs that may best be served by services that can be accessed through their housing. It is important to note, however, that not all destitute individuals require supportive housing to regain stability. Many, especially those who have experienced short-term destituteness due to a fire, loss of job, or temporary separation from family, may only need assistance in finding housing that is affordable, rather than ongoing services.

A great variation is evident in the meaning of services within supportive housing. Services may be provided on site or offsite, and may be available for restricted hours or on a 24-hour basis. Supports can be limited to basic security and individual case management services, or can include a host of health, mental health, and daily living services. In some instances, the housing case manager facilitates the linkages with the mainstream service system. In other instances, especially when the needs of the residents are specialized and/or the system exhibits gaps in certain service areas, some services may be provided directly on site.

The types and intensity of services and supports are generally influenced by many factors, such as the amount of funds available, staff-to-resident ratios, needs of the population being served (some buildings are intended to cater for individuals with a specific set of needs, such as severe and persistent mental illness or HIV/AIDS; others are open to a broad population of individuals with varying levels of service needs), and so forth.

### 3.2.1.2 Transitional housing
Transitional housing is designed as temporary housing (ranging from 3 months to 24 months or longer) typically with a high intensity of services. It is predicated on the notion that when destitute individuals initially make the transition into housing, they need a more structured setting with a range of services being readily available, including employment readiness and education, mental health, substance abuse, health, and others. However, as the individual or family stabilizes, the concept is that the services will be
needed less and the individual will be ready to move into more independent, permanent housing.

Transitional housing is considered a large component of the continuum of housing options, but it is not a necessary step for all destitute people.

3.2.1.3 Towards various types of permanent housing

Several studies (Center for Mental Health Services, 1994; Rog & Gutman, 1997) have indicated that some destitute people can move directly from the streets and shelters to various types of permanent housing, including SROs and multi/single family rental housing, and remain stable for considerable periods of time. There may be instances, however, especially with individuals who have been destitute for long periods of time, when transitional and interim housing may be needed as a preliminary step (Fosburg et al., 1997; Barrow & Soto, 1996). In some instances, the housing may be needed as a critical bridge for people who are ready to leave destituteness but do not yet enjoy access to permanent housing.

3.2.2 Conclusion
Overall, research indicates that the residential stability of destitute individuals and families can be fostered, largely by providing some combination of housing (or access to housing) and services and supports (Fosburg et al., 1997; Barrow & Soto, 1996). Residential stability has been defined and measured in a variety of ways. Most studies have measured stability as accessing community-based housing and living stably (i.e., without moving residences) in that housing for a period of time (generally measured at 12 to 18 months after initially entering the particular housing).

Reconnecting with housing is often the first step in reconnecting individuals with the community. In fact, becoming stably housed is increasingly being recognized as a prerequisite to other steps in reconnecting with the community: that is, moving back into the job market, being linked with needed services, and reestablishing or initially establishing ties with family and other sources of support. Therefore, identifying interventions that are effective in fostering residential stability is critical to understanding
how community reintegration can begin. Conclusions regarding the fostering of residential stability can be summarized in the words of Rog et al. (1996:80-81):

1. Once in housing—generally with supports—the majority of destitute people stay housed
2. Rental subsidies improve residential stability
3. Providing housing is often not enough; other assistance can help
4. Provide housing first, before tackling other issues
5. A range of options may be needed to meet the range of needs and preferences.

These authors also identified the need to consider barriers to reconnecting destitute people to housing. It would appear that the following are the most common:
1. Lack of affordable housing and limited supply of subsidies (e.g., vouchers)
2. Community opposition
3. Substance abuse.

### 3.3 Outside-in missions as reconnecting people to employment

According to Rossi (1989:19) the vast majority of the destitute are unemployed and extremely poor. Furthermore, destitute people face numerous personal, logistical, and economic obstacles to obtaining employment, such as:

- Lack of access to transportation (most widely cited issue);
- Lack of education or competitive work skills (cited by most destitute people as a problem);
- Family-related problems, including lack of day-care;
- Mental illness, physical disabilities, and/or learning disabilities.

Other obstacles involve the social stigmas and stereotypes associated with destituteness and the disabilities of many destitute people, such as mental illness.

Various studies have shown that becoming “acculturated/acclimatized” to a destitute lifestyle can create additional impediments to moving off the streets (Grigsby, Baumann, Gregorich & Roberts-Gray, 1990; Rowe & Wolch, 1990; Snow & Anderson, 1993). With
respect to employment, Wenzel found that the length of time spent destitute was significantly and negatively associated with leaving an employment programme prematurely (Wenzel, 1992:62).

The job prospects of destitute people are also affected and often caused by changes in labour markets and industries that have disproportionately affected people who are less educated and less skilled (Hardin, 1996:51). The decline of blue-collar industries and their replacement with service-sector jobs, the globalization of the economy, the rapid pace of technological change, and the relocation of firms outside the boundaries of inner-cities have all erected additional barriers to employment, particularly for less-educated workers (Harrison & Bluestone, 1992; Holzer, 1996; Moss & Tilly, 1995).

According to Shlay & Rossi (1992:133) destitute people have become more isolated from the labour market than those who were considered destitute 30 or 40 years ago. Although most destitute people are not currently linked to the labour market, it would be a mistake to conclude that most of these people have never worked. However, although many destitute people have worked, the types of jobs they have typically held have not provided much income or security (Rossi, 1989:24).

Despite the substantial employment problems faced by destitute people, few programmes or projects have been developed or evaluated to address this need. Although there is much evidence that destitute people face problems finding and keeping jobs, particularly jobs that pay enough to allow them into housing, few programmes have been developed that explicitly focus on improving the job prospects of destitute people (Johnson & Cnaan, 1995; Whiting, 1994).

Working towards reconnecting destitute people to employment, we should consider the following (Rog & Holupka, 1998: 201-216)
3.3.1 We need a comprehensive approach, involving housing and services

A comprehensive approach towards employment is necessary, particularly involving the provision of housing and services prior to or together with any employment effort. Programmes designed to employ people who are destitute, or were recently destitute, have used a variety of approaches, including job training, “transitional work programs,” and entrepreneurial efforts to create “affirmative enterprises” (Whiting, 1994:34). A consistent finding stemming from all of these types of efforts is the need to coordinate and combine employment services with other types of services and supports, particularly housing. Emerson and Twersky (1996:24) suggest that efforts to move the destitute into the mainstream must rest on “the three legs of a stool: housing, services, and jobs” (Emerson & Twersky, 1996).

Core services that need to be made available include: case management; assessment and employability development planning; alcohol and other substance abuse assessment and counselling; other support services (e.g., child care, transportation, mental health assessment/counselling, health services); job training services; job development and placement services; post-placement follow-up and support; and housing services (Rog et al., 1998:212).

3.3.2 Job training and development efforts have shown mixed results

Although it is unfortunate that destitute people have not enjoyed access to traditional training programmes, equipping them for jobs, studies have generally established that most of these programmes only have a modest impact, at best, on their participants. A recent assessment of over thirty years of job training programmes arrived at the conclusion that “the results are very discouraging: thirty years of experimentation with job training programs have created a substantial number of programs whose benefits—for individuals in dire need of employment and economic independence—are quite trivial, and are completely inadequate to the task of moving them out of poverty, off of welfare, or into stable employment over the long run” (Grubb, 1995:88).
Speculating why such poor results have been obtained, Grubb (1995:89-91) identified a number of possible factors, such as: programmes that are too small and brief; too much emphasis on short-term results; the poor quality of many programmes; lack of follow-up and long-term support; poor matching of people with jobs; and possible lack of appropriate jobs in the labour market. Grubb’s recommendation is to create more comprehensive and coordinated employment-related services. Their goal would be to create an education and training “ladder” that people could access at any level, with “vertical” linkages so that they could move into a succession of more demanding, better paying jobs, instead of being limited to jobs that are often boring, low paying, and offer few prospects for advancement. One should note, though, that job development is inexpensive, useful and successful, but labour-intensive.

3.3.3 Supported employment
Supported employment is based on the philosophy that individuals with disabilities can perform meaningful work in competitive settings if given support (Block, 1992; Drake, McHugo, Becker, Anthony, & Clark, 1996). The key characteristic of supported employment is that it assists an individual in obtaining and maintaining a job in the regular work force. The support includes assistance in obtaining a job, in training, and in staying on the job (Wehman & Kregel, 1985:9). The role of job coach is a central feature of supported employment.

3.3.4 Developing affirmative businesses and in-house jobs offer market alternatives
Faced with problems placing people in “regular” jobs, more programmes are attempting to develop their own affirmative businesses and in-house opportunities. In recent years, a number of nonprofit organizations have started to develop business ventures for both disabled and non-disabled populations. According to a recent report from the Roberts Foundation (Emerson & Twersky, 1996:7-8), such organizations have begun businesses for several reasons:

1. Lack of mainstream employment and training programmes available to destitute people;
The difficulty the participants experienced obtaining employment in the competitive work force;
The interest of some organizations in becoming more self-supporting.

3.3.5 Job turnover is common, and even after obtaining jobs, many people remain economically vulnerable

Even when people are successful obtaining jobs they are likely to remain economically vulnerable. A corollary of expecting high job turnover rates is also to expect that improvements in employment rates and income levels will not occur quickly, if at all.

3.4 CTI as a social services strategy to be used as part of “outside-in” missions

While social services such as reconnecting to housing, clinical services, health care and employment all constitute part of missions with the destitute, we must also remember that these missions are not “once-off” engagements between helpers and destitute people; rather, over a period of time, effort is invested along a “continuum of care”. Somewhere along this “continuum” destitute people may want to reintegrate themselves into society – and we must help them in their own efforts to do so. Our efforts at social services would be incomplete without this attempt. It will obviously reconnect them to a community or communities.

Susser et al. (1997:256-262) developed an approach called CTI (Critical Time Intervention) to assist previously destitute people with their successful reintegration into society. The “Critical Time” would then be the time at which a previously destitute person leaves services to re-integrate into society.

The preferred scenario, in terms of missions with the destitute, is that people should be slowly reintegrated from the first day, as they are drawn into church communities or other valued communities through outreach and engagement. In this way reintegration can happen gradually and almost spontaneously. However, this is not always possible, because destitute people are often taken up into services and
programmes from which they must then reintegrate into society. This is where CTI finds its application.

Originally CTI was developed as a (long term) cost-effective programme to assist destitute people with severe mental illness in their transition from shelters to community living. However, CTI is a sound approach to use with all destitute people as they make the transition back into society (from shelters and programmes). The variable factor will be the length of time that a person receives CTI intervention. In the most severe cases, a period of 9 – 24 months is recommended, decreasing with “less severe” cases of destitute people.

Basically, CTI calls for continued and specific support as/while people are returning into society. This support includes connection to relevant services “on the outside” (of shelters etc.), intervention in order to strengthen family and other relationships, and to continually improve life skills (when the need for such skills is tested by the demands of society).

As part of the continuum of care delivery, helpers could implement the successful strategies described in Critical Time Intervention (CTI) to prevent recurrent destituteness and promote successful transitions to housing, and reintegration into society. One component of CTI is to strengthen the relationship between the individual and family, friends, and services, and secondly to provide emotional and practical support during the critical time after discharge from a shelter or programme. Outcomes of CTI included a significant reduction in destituteness and a preliminary indication that CTI is cost-effective (Jones et al., 2003, Susser, et al., 1997). Interventions are short in duration, simple, can be implemented by nonprofessional staff, and can be implemented in marginal settings (Susser et al., 1997: 256-259).

The principal components of CTI encompass rapid placement in transitional housing, continued treatment by means of services, networking with different services and brokering and monitoring the appropriate support arrangements to ensure continuity of care.
Requirements for CTI will include case workers, constant follow-up (weekly if possible) and brokering agreements with agencies and institutions to help the previous destitute person for the necessary time frame, which may vary from person to person (Susser et al., 1997:259 - 260).

CTI as an approach is labour-intensive, but extremely beneficial in terms of the support that is provided to the previously destitute person. Research has proven this approach to be successful in preventing the recurrence of destitution (Susser et al., 2003:67).

CTI may be considered as part of outside-in missions, because it focuses on efforts from outside to empower destitute people and constitutes part of the social services delivery strategies that should benefit the destitute.

4 “Outside-in” missions as the empowerment of communities

The forming of social ties (Chapter 6) gives rise to community and the eventual formation of communities, which can play a significant role in the lives of destitute people; therefore the formation of communities (of care and support), and the strengthening of such existing communities should be actively pursued by helpers.

Being part of a community can benefit destitute people in a number of ways. Firstly, by creating social spaces that will prevent destitution. Such communities will, secondly, also help the destitute to heal, by providing support and a safe harbour. Thirdly, communities will also share a stronger (combined) voice for advocacy, employment negotiations and other engagements with the power structures of the day.

Therefore it becomes important not only to link the destitute to communities by the forming of social ties, but also to strengthen and develop communities themselves so that they will empower their members not to become destitute (in the process also preventing destitution); it is also vital to utilize communities to help heal destitute people.
Saleebey (1997:201) defines a community as “a dynamic whole that emerges when a group of people participate in common practices, depend on one another, make decisions together, identify themselves as part of something larger than the sum of their individual relationships, commit themselves for the long term to their own, one another’s and the group’s well-being”.

Traditionally, the word that was used for community empowerment is “development”. Development is seen as the way to empower people out of entrapment in the poverty cycle. In this sense, the United Nations in its Millennium Declaration of 2000 ((United Nations 2000:11) sums up the hopes of many in the world when it speaks of the “right to development”:

We will spare no effort to free our fellow men, women and children from the abject and dehumanizing conditions of extreme poverty, to which more than a billion of them are currently subjected. We are committed to making the right to development a reality for everyone and to freeing the entire human race from want

In terms of community development approaches, the intention is not to develop a model here. Rather, the focus is placed on discerning principles and applying them as part of strategies that should empower communities to become places (physical – social – economic spaces) that will sustain a way of life where people are non-destitute and can remain so.

4.1 “Development” vs. “livelihoods”

Even though “development” is the word traditionally used for the empowerment of communities, it has become problematic.

Of course the world does need “community development”, for the world is in trouble: the growing problem of destitution and poverty can be interpreted as the proof of the failure of the current status quo in the world. As Korten (1990) expresses this:

We have become prisoners of an obsolete vision of our global reality and the nature of human progress. This vision equates human progress with growth in the market value of economic output and subordinates both human and environmental considerations to that goal. The result has been the extravagant consumption of the world’s resources by a favoured few with little recognition of the social and
environment costs borne by the many. These costs have now accumulated to the point of endangering the continued well-being of everyone on planet earth (1990:3).

Vandana Shiva (1989:5) writes of “maldevelopment”, “the violation of the integrity of organic, interconnected and interdependent systems, that sets in motion a process of exploitation, inequality, injustice and violence”.

Against this background, Gilbert Rist (1997:21) argues that development is “an element in the religion of modernity” allied to western ideas of progress, growth and linear notions of history, a belief that has had disastrous consequences for the world.

This illustrates something of the fact that the word “development” becomes problematic when talking about missions with the destitute, for it implies that we go and do our projects to them, so that we can develop them to our standards. The entire approach to empowering people suggested here is completely different: we do it with the people we try to help, not least in terms of community development. Given the vague nature of the term “sustainable development”, and other problems associated with the term “development”, De Gruchy (2002:2-3) chooses the term “sustainable livelihoods”. He argues:

It immediately does away with all the problems, conflicts and disagreements associated with the term development. It reminds us that development is not the goal of our labours, but rather a process by which we may enhance our lives and our livelihoods. Furthermore, social evolutionary notions like ‘developed’ and ‘underdeveloped’ people, cultures or societies can be avoided, and the focus on lives and livelihoods provides a bench-mark against which different development initiatives and even paradigms may be evaluated.

For Chambers (1997:7) a livelihood comprises “the capabilities, assets (stores, resources, claims and access) and activities required for a means of living”. A more simple definition is “a means of living or of supporting life and meeting individual and community needs”.

De Gruchy (2002:3) continues:
A livelihood, then, is what people do day by day to survive and flourish in the face of what comes their way, given the resources and relationships at their command. In its purely descriptive form, it recognizes that even destitute and vulnerable people – people who are considered by standard formula to be “poverty stricken” or “unemployed” – are active and engaged in ‘making do’, utilizing a range of adaptive and survival strategies to live and enhance their lives.

In doing missions with the destitute, we are not bringing development to them, rather, we are empowering them towards the improving of their livelihood, and the livelihoods of the communities of which they are part – not forgetting that we also constitute part of those communities. Therefore, the term “development” should make room for “livelihoods”.

At the same time the word “community empowerment” rather than “community development” should be used, bearing in mind that the aim of these empowerment efforts is to bring about sustainable livelihoods. Therefore, in the context of missions with the destitute, helpers should rather speak of “community empowerment towards sustainable livelihood”.

If the aim of community empowerment is to create sustainable livelihoods, then “community empowerment” must be seen as the strategy to use towards this aim.

4.2 Principles for community empowerment

In recent decades, development theorists and practitioners have come to recognize that a certain number of basic ingredients (principles) are required, if real community empowerment is to take place. From the work of De Gruchy (2003, 2007), McKnight & Kretzman (1993) and others, the following principles can be discerned.

4.2.1 Community empowerment must aim to improve livelihoods

This does imply change: not just any change, but a definite improvement: a change for the better. People must be empowered to “make do” in a better way, a non-destitute way, so that their livelihood can be improved and become sustainable.
4.2.2 Community empowerment must be in line with the people of the community

It must make sense to people and be in line with their values and their capacity. Development must therefore be appropriate: culturally, socially, economically, technologically, and environmentally.

4.2.3 Community empowerment must promote equity and justice

At the heart of any change for the better in communities are the twin ingredients of equity and justice. Change will not be an improvement if it is built on injustice and does not benefit people equally.

4.2.4 Community empowerment must handle resistance

Community empowerment, combined with a quest for justice and equity, usually meets resistance from some quarters, which means that struggle, opposition, and conflict of some kind also constitute essential ingredients of development, because relationships are a major factor in determining development. Relationships between individuals, communities, the sexes, the social classes, and power groups combine with international relationships to dictate the equity of community empowerment throughout the world. Effective empowerment will inevitably challenge some of these relationships in the process of changing them.

4.2.5 Community empowerment must be driven from the bottom up

Esteva (in Shiva, 1989:13) asserts, “My people are tired of development. They just want to live”. This critiques the efforts at development from the “top down” that outsiders bring with them. Along the same lines Escobar terms development a “top-down, ethnocentric and technocratic approach… a force so destructive to Third World cultures, ironically in the name of people’s interests” (Escobar, 1997:81).

Empowerment from the bottom up means the poor are helped to become active agents in their own growth towards sustainable livelihoods. It includes terms like “participation” and even touches on “consumer involvement” (Chapter 6).
The poor must act as agents in their own “development”. Development theory and practice has been plagued by the insider-outsider, or top down-bottom up, relationships that centre on issues of power, participation and decision-making. However, bottom-up empowerment encourages poor communities and vulnerable people to be agents in rather than clients of their empowerment. It shares the vision of the 1989 Manila Declaration on People’s Participation and Sustainable Development (in Korten 1990:218):

To exercise their sovereignty and assume responsibility for the development of themselves and their communities, the people must control their own resources, have access to relevant information, and have the means to hold the officials of government accountable.

Part of a bottom-up approach must include respect for the fact that the aim of community empowerment should not be to drive our programmes and projects, but to empower the people of the community to improve their livelihood. De Gruchy (2002:7) calls this “The seamless experience of life”. He describes the way in which we tend to drive our programmes, then leave again, often stopping the project or programme because it didn’t work, or funds have dried up, and so forth. However, the people of the community must still continue living in a “seamless” way. Therefore, driving programmes and projects does not contribute to improving the lives of the community in a way that will allow this improvement to remain when the project is terminated.

So, while it is clear that efforts to attract outside resources must continue, and even accelerate, it is also abundantly evident that they will not suffice. As Kretzman & McKnight (1993:4) comment, “help is continuing to evaporate”.

Helpers serious about community empowerment consequently have no choice but to return to basics, to the communities themselves, in order to rediscover and mobilize the strengths, capacities, and assets within those communities.
4.2.6 Community empowerment must foster participation
Participation is a critical aspect of equity. If empowerment is really to belong to people, it must be shared by them. This means involving them. It is now a well-known principle that true empowerment can be achieved only by people and cannot be done to people. Representation and involvement in decision-making, action, and outcome are therefore regarded as essential. Many development theorists use the word “democracy” to describe this process.

As research on development has increasingly illustrated over the past few decades, involving the community centrally in its own development (i.e. using participatory approaches to empower community members) is critical for sustainability (Foster & Mathie, 2001:1).

4.2.7 Community empowerment must promote sustainable livelihoods
Empowering communities, and any changes for the better that form part of this process, is judged as successful by whether or not it lasts. Sustainability, self-reliance, and independence are perceived as vital ingredients towards community empowerment. Sustainability is particularly important, because it guarantees a future for the improvements brought about by a community or society.

The premise is simple: if we can make communities more sustainable, then the members of those communities will experience much better lives, and their chances of becoming destitute themselves should decrease dramatically.

Chambers (1997:7) argue that a livelihood is sustainable when it:

…can cope with and recover from stress and shocks (drought, floods, political failure etc.), maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets, and provide sustainable livelihood opportunities for the next generation; and which contributes net benefits to other livelihoods at the local and global levels and in the short and long term.

In the same vein, the UNDP (1999:3) describes sustainable livelihoods as those that are:
• Able to cope with and recover from shocks and stresses such as drought, civil war, policy failure through adaptive and coping strategies;
• Economically effective, or able to use minimal inputs to generate a given amount of outputs;
• Ecologically sound, ensuring that livelihood activities do not irreversibly degrade natural resources within a given ecosystem; and
• Socially equitable, which suggests that promotion of livelihood opportunities for one group would not foreclose options for other groups either now or in the future.

In times of crisis (such as a flood, or epidemic), sustainable livelihoods adopt “coping” strategies, and in less stressful times, these become “adaptive” strategies. “The sustainable livelihoods approach stresses choice, opportunity and diversity since greater choice and flexibility yields greater capacity to survive or adapt to shocks and stresses from the vulnerability context” (Butler and Greenstein, 1999:57). These strategies may or may not draw on the natural resource base, and they may draw on a multiplicity of inputs to survive, so it is vital not to make prior assumptions about what poor people do (or should do) for a living (De Gruchy, 2002:10).

4.2.8 Community empowerment must be faith based
We engage communities to empower them because we believe in God, we likewise believe in His preferential option for the poor, and we adhere to the quest for social justice that the Bible encourages. According to Ramsey (2001:2) faith-based community empowerment is comprehensive, asset-based, and driven from the bottom up by congregations and helpers that protect control of communities’ powers, as opposed to ceding control to government or other organizations.

Whereas community development approaches are often based on the idea of citizens’ participation in government initiatives, faith-based community empowerment has a biblical imperative to reverse these roles, so that governments (and other organizations) support citizens’ initiatives (Ramsey, 2001:2).
4.2.9 Community empowerment must be comprehensive

A comprehensive approach to community empowerment should be comprehensive in the sense that it engages in a range of coordinated activities. In this way it addresses community empowerment as holistically as possible. This must happen on both a micro and macro level, where empowerment efforts aim to engage both micro- and macro-level issues at the same time, emphasizing the dynamic interaction between the two.

De Gruchy (2002: 8) explains the difference in the following way. Community empowerment at the local or micro level will focus on a small social unit and seek ways to make a difference where people are living. Such activities are usually highly participatory and aim for small-scale victories. The classic examples are brick-making or sewing projects, the best of which employ perhaps a dozen people. On the other hand, national and regional development policies, such as the NEPAD process mentioned above, will usually focus on macro-economic and political issues, seeking to reduce unemployment, or enhance access to health care. While they may create conditions in which thousands of people are employed, such activities are usually leader-driven and non-participatory, thus leading to unforeseen consequences in terms of human, financial and environmental costs.

Butler and Greenstein (1999:46) explain the interaction between the two when they state that a community empowerment approach emphasizes “the importance of macro level policy and institutions to the livelihood options of communities and individuals. It also stresses the need for policy development and planning to be informed by lessons learnt and insights gained at the local level. This will give local people a stake in policy and increase overall effectiveness”.

Ekins (1992:150), an economist, developed a “four–capital” model of wealth creation which will create a “life economics” and which affords valuable insights. He contends that the goal of “development” (empowering communities) can no longer be merely growth in production and financial capital, but that it also needs to include positive effects on environmental capital, human capital (knowledge, skills, health and
motivation), physically produced capital (infrastructure, machines) and social/organisational capital (legal, political, community, family, organisations and firms). He explained the concept of organisational capital as follows: “For present purposes organisational capital is taken to be quite distinct from human capital, being embodied in the structures, rules, norms and cultures of organisations and societies at large, which enable people to be jointly productive” (Ekins, 1992:150).

A comprehensive approach to community empowerment should ensure the incorporation and engagement of all the different factors involved in the communities named above, as well as any other aspects that might arise when we become involved with communities.

4.2.10 Community empowerment must be asset based
In chapter 4 “strength-based” approaches with destitute people were explored; they utilize the strengths of individual people in order to empower them. Asset-based community empowerment applies this principle to communities. We could therefore also speak of “strength-based community empowerment”, but in the community development world, the term “asset-based” is used.

According to McNight & Kretzman (1993:2), this represents an approach to community-based empowerment based on the principles of:

- Appreciating and mobilizing individual and community talents, skills and assets (rather than focusing on problems and needs)
- Community-driven development rather than development driven by external agencies.

Instead of focusing on a community's needs, deficiencies and problems, asset-based community empowerment aids communities to become stronger and more self-reliant by discovering, mapping and mobilizing all their local assets. Few people realize how many assets any community possesses (McNight & Kretzman, 1993:3). This approach is based on the belief that, firstly, communities are built and empowered by focusing on the strengths and capacities of the citizens and associations which call the community
"home" and that, secondly, the assets of a community's institutions also can be identified and mobilized to build (empower) community. There are a range of approaches and tools, such as asset mapping, that can put these beliefs into practice. This approach also perceives the community as a “treasure chest” to be built upon; to be used to empower members of that community. Resources from outside the community (e.g., external grants) should be used only as a last resort in order to fill “gaps.”

Such an approach seeks to uncover and highlight the strengths within communities as a means for sustainable development. Its basic tenet is that, although there are both capacities and deficiencies in every community, a capacities-focused approach is more likely to empower the community and therefore to mobilize its citizens to create positive and meaningful change from within. A typical needs assessment may ask, “What is the problem?” In contrast, asset-based approaches might enquire, “How can our community assemble its strengths into new combinations, new structures of opportunity, new sources of income and control, and new possibilities?”

De Gruchy (2007:3) emphasizes the importance of this approach: “Starting with people’s needs, deficiencies and problems ends up creating client communities that are consumers of development services”. Butler and Greenstein (1999: 46) likewise point out that “a key objective is to remove the constraints to the realization of potential. In this way people will be assisted to become more robust, stronger and better able to achieve their own objectives”.

4.2.10.1 What assets should helpers look for?
Drawing from the work of Butler and Greenstein (1999:49-54); George (1999:4) and McNight & Kretzman (1993:1-11), a number of potential assets can be determined. These writers use the term “capital” to describe assets:

4.2.10.1.1 Human capital
This refers to skills, knowledge, good health, and the ability to labour. It includes the gifts of individuals, whatever those gifts might be. Many communities make use of this concept by means of a simple two-part pledge, which is basic to community
empowerment: Every person in this community is gifted, and every person in this community will contribute his/her gifts and resources.

4.2.10.1.2 Social capital
This form of capital is taken to mean the social resources upon which people draw in pursuit of their livelihood objectives. It includes networks and connectedness, more formal group membership and trust, reciprocity and exchange. McKnight and Kretzman (1993:6) include local citizens associations, as well as institutions. In terms of local citizens’ associations, it was Alexis de Tocqueville who first named them, these "self-appointed" groups that congregate to take on community problems, or to aggregate their resources and interests in many other ways. In more recent decades, community mobilizers such as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Saul Alinsky have recognized the power of local religious, civic, and cultural groups as the bedrock for organizing.

“Institutions” signifies those institutions that are physically located in the community. Though they vary, every community possesses some local institutions. The challenge involves re-focusing at least a part of their mission and resources on community-building activity. How can local schools, parks, libraries, human service agencies, etc. contribute to the revitalization of community?

4.2.10.1.3 Natural capital
This term refers to the natural resources that are available to households and communities in pursuit of their livelihoods and includes everything from intangible public goods such as the atmosphere to direct resources such as trees and plants.

4.2.10.1.4 Physical capital
This is the phrase used to describe the infrastructure (such as transport, shelter, energy, communications) and producer goods (such as tools and equipment) that is required to support livelihoods.

4.2.10.1.5 Financial capital
This encompasses the money that is available to the household, either in the form of stocks, such as cash, bank deposits, livestock, jewellery, and credit; or in the form of
regular inflows of money from wages, social security, and other remittances. It will also include economic linkages and business assets.

Two more types of capital should be added, as argued earlier:

4.2.10.1.6  **Spiritual capital**
This includes the inner strengths and attitudes stemming from a relationship with God, and practices stemming from that relationship. It will also encompass beliefs. While spiritual capital may also be perceived as part of human capital, it is sufficiently different to merit being distinguished, even though it is a more intangible asset.

4.2.10.1.7  **Visionary capital**
This represents another intangible asset. It refers to plans, dreams and hopes that can be utilized to motivate communities, such as projects for sustainable community and economic development.

4.2.10.2  **Strategies to promote asset based community empowerment**
Asset based community empowerment is, clearly, a process of self-mobilization and organizing for change (McKnight & Kretzman, 1993:5), The challenge for helpers is to stimulate this process without causing the opposite effect of dependency. From the work of these two authors, the following strategies can be applied:

4.2.10.2.1  **Discover assets…**

4.2.10.2.1.1  **Through outreach and engagement**
Such empowerment begins with outreach and engagement to people and the communities where they live (even the community of the streets). In this way we “find” the people we are to do missions with.

Kraybill (1992:23) writes of “building trust and instilling hope”. Practically, the community of the street must come to know and trust one, before they will allow helpers to help them in any way. For this, a point of contact is needed, from which relationship can be built, such as providing food at some place every night to the community of the street.
4.2.10.2.1.2 Through the collecting of stories
In order to begin building confidence in the community, the conducting of informal discussions and interviews that draw out people's experience of successful activities and projects may help to uncover the gifts, skills, talents and assets of people. Not only does this uncover assets that people have not recognized before, but it also strengthens people's pride in their achievements. This celebration of achievement and realization of what they can contribute builds confidence in their abilities to be producers, not recipients, of change and empowerment.

4.2.10.2.2 Map assets…
Asset mapping is an inventory of the community’s treasure chest. In the process of this inventorying, important relationships are developed. However, asset mapping is NOT an action step. Asset mobilization IS an action step. Mobilizing assets for collective action requires organizing and harnessing the relationships that exist within the community.

Mapping is more than gathering data. It is very important that citizens and their associations undertake the asset mapping themselves so that they themselves build new relationships, learn more about the contributions and talents of community members, and identify potential linkages between different assets.

Mapping can be carried out at the individual, organizational or the community level. It can be used to identify whom to involve, which issue(s) to work on, or, after the issue is prioritized, to further plan and implement activities. Mapping tools are located at the web site mentioned below19. The following mapping tools generally apply and can be used:

4.2.10.2.2.1 Identify associations (relatedness)
The starting point of this exercise is to identify associations in the community. These relationships are the engines of community action, and are therefore essential.

4.2.10.2.2.2 Identify individual gifts, skills, and capacities

19 http://www.northwestern.edu/IPR/abcd.html.
There are many(128,187),(857,952) ways of trying to elicit individual gifts, skills and capacities. The important thing is to ensure that this is not just a data gathering exercise, but a way in which people feel that their abilities and contributions are appreciated. Eventually a "capacity inventory" is developed, listing these capacities in categories such as "community building skills", "enterprise skills", "teaching skills", and/or "artistic skills". A simpler approach might be to divide them into skills of the heart, head, and hand.

4.2.10.2.2.3 Identify the assets of local institutions
This will include governmental and non-governmental agencies and private sector businesses. The assets of these institutions could be the services and programmes they provide, the meeting places they offer, the equipment and other supplies they may possess, or the communications links they may have. They also employ paid or unpaid staff who may be important links in the community.

4.2.10.2.2.4 Identify physical assets and natural resources
Assets such as land, water, mineral or other resources can be listed here, identifying those which are communally, and those which are individually, owned and managed.

4.2.10.2.2.5 Mapping the local economy
This exercise assists people in the community to understand how the local economy works, showing how well local resources are maximized for local economic benefit. Are products and services imported that could be produced locally?

4.2.10.2.2.6 Building and strengthening partnerships among local assets for mutually beneficial problem solving within the community
Mapping can be used to identify and enlist potential partners in ways that are different from the way we tend to recruit (e.g., recruiting participants by approaching professional organizations in the community and asking for a representative). Again, this can be carried out at multiple levels and in the context of the different priority health areas.

There are many examples of means to accomplish this goal. Specifically, recruiting unique individuals who might not otherwise participate; finding persons who can be involved not as clients but as contributors; identifying associations and clubs; local private, public and non-profit institutions; the community’s physical assets (land,
buildings, streets, transportation systems) and collaborative leaders who are interested in constantly expanding the numbers and kinds of people involved.

4.2.10.2.3 Mobilize assets…

The process of realizing the community vision begins with the community and its associations asking themselves, "What can we do to make this vision happen?" External resources are not tapped until local resources have been utilized. This places the community in a position of strength in dealing with external institutions.

4.2.10.2.3.1 By organizing a core group

In the process of collecting stories, particular people will emerge as leaders in the community: those who have shown commitment and leadership in the past or who are currently taking a leadership role. The next step is to organise a group of such committed individuals who are interested in exploring further the community's assets and acting on the opportunities identified. Each of these individuals will have a network of relationships inside the community whom they can draw into the process. Each of these individuals will display a personal interest: something that motivates him or her to act.

4.2.10.2.3.2 By convening as broadly representative a group as possible to build a community vision and plan

During this part of the process, assets are matched with opportunities in terms of an "organizing theme": a vision for community development. An activity is selected within that organizing theme which the community can begin working on immediately. It needs to be:

- Concrete (people know what to do to succeed, and what success will look like),
- Immediate, achievable with community resources,
- Unifying (it brings people together),
- And strengthening (people's skills are used and valued)

How is this process managed? It is important that the representative group which is convened reflects the energy that has been identified at the associational level. Institutions take a back-seat role, leaving decision-making to those who have been identified as leaders in the community, with key links to associational networks.
Simple, but compelling questions that can be adapted to the specific community could ask “who are we in this community and what do we value most?” “Where would we like our community to go in the next five, ten, twenty years?” There are many community planning models and approaches. What succeeds in one community will not necessarily be successful in another. The main principles, though, are to begin with assets, expand the table, and combine planning with problem-solving.

Beginning with assets is to start by making a thorough inventory of the capacities of individuals, associations and institutions in the community. Expanding the table refers to making the planning process as open and participatory as possible, including participants not normally thought of as community leaders. Finally, combining planning with problem-solving implies choosing practical activities that the group can start working on in the present, while at the same time planning long-term efforts.

4.2.10.2.3.3 By mobilizing assets for community development

The process continues as an ongoing mobilization of community assets for economic development and information-sharing purposes, initiated by the associational base. Associations are encouraged to engage by appealing to their interests, finding common ground and ensuring that they are contributing on their own terms. Eventually, an "association of associations" emerges.

Beyond locating assets and beginning to build relationships, ABCD involves mobilizing all of the community’s assets. Each local association and institution could be urged to begin making its own set of contributions. For example, organizations can provide support (e.g., encouragement, direction, mentoring, guidance, linkages, transportation, etc.) to those who have contributions to make, as part of the solutions/activities that are being implemented. The capacity to exchange information is central to the success of any community-building project. Hence it is important to learn about all those places in the community where communication of a “public” nature takes place: churches, clubs, beauty- and barber-shops, and even street corners. How can these be validated, strengthened and expanded?
4.2.11 Community empowerment must combat marginalization

Burns & Santos (1995:6-7) believes that although people are affected by global or national processes over which they enjoy little or no control, local development (empowerment) initiatives still represent the way in which social, economic and political structures will be improved for marginalised people. He names four interdependent types of development (empowerment): human and personal, political, economic and social, which together will create self-reliant communities. I would categorize human and personal development as “inside empowerment”, while the rest would fall into the category of “outside empowerment”.

Friedmann (1992:7), however, believes that self-reliance is not enough, since poor people do not control the resources needed to improve their situation. Really to empower people by means of “alternative development”, we should understand the use of the common resources (usually controlled by the state) and the removal of those structural constraints that help to keep the poor impoverished. “If an alternative development is to advocate the social empowerment of the poor, it must also advocate their political empowerment” (Friedmann 1992:7).

4.3 Community empowerment through caring for the environment

Healthy community development practices must eventually lead to greater concern for the environment: therefore this aspect of community development needs attention. The environment sustains us, and makes life possible. Yet the economy dictates how we make use of the environment to sustain life. Against this background, two seemingly opposing agendas arise: should we rather choose to protect the environment, or should we strive harder to make use of the resources of the environment so as to eradicate poverty?

At heart, economy and ecology should cohere; after all they both concern the earth, our oikos, or home. Ecology, as oikos-logos, concerns the wisdom of the way in which our home functions; while economy, as oikos-nomos, encompasses the rules that should govern the way we run our home (De Gruchy, 2007b:3).
We have only one earth; therefore the way we run our economy should never go outside the boundaries of what ecology can sustain. As Rasmussen (1996:112) states, “Economic production and consumption, as well as human reproduction, are unsustainable when they no longer fall within the borders of nature’s regeneration”.

The need to care for our environment in a way that will promote the sustainable regeneration of life is opposed to economic agendas, such as the plight of the poor. De Gruchy (2007b:2-5) describes these as the “brown” and “green” agendas.

“The brown agenda is concerned with poverty… The brown agenda drives us to deal with economics, for the solution lies in structuring the economy – globally, nationally and locally – so as to ‘make poverty history’” (De Gruchy, 2007b:3). The green agenda concerns itself with the environment. While we may hold that such concerns are born of the privileged way in which the non-poor can think about things other than poverty, this in itself does not make these concerns any less correct…And for those who believe that God has created the earth good, and that we human beings hold it in stewardship for the next generations, the green agenda is also of deep significance for Christian believers, according to De Gruchy (2007b:3).

De Gruchy (2007b:6-10) therefore proposes that we adopt an “olive” agenda, one that combines the brown (poverty) agenda with the green (environment) agenda. This metaphor simply facilitates the combination of both agendas in a balanced way within the boundaries of theological, ethical and sustainable social development. Simply put: we should care for the earth while also caring for the poor. In this way we really have only one agenda, an olive agenda that strives to care for the poor in an environment that can be regenerated and sustained.

5 Conclusion
The social structures and fabric of our world are in chaos. Helpers serious about empowering destitute people must take note of the structural, environmental and socio-economical external issues that cause people to become destitute. It appears that an approach which reconnects destitute people to communities, and which strengthens those
communities towards sustainable livelihoods, is the best one for outside-in missions. At the same time we should strive to provide those services that the destitute cannot struggle for by themselves, such as health, housing and reconnection to employment. These strategies and all they incorporate should go a long way towards creating an environment in which people would not have to become destitute anymore.

In this regard I concur with the words of De Gruchy: “The challenge is clear: we need to make poverty history. We have the resources, the skills, the organisational capacity, the vision, the passion. What we don’t seem to have is much progress!” (2007b:1) This clearly illustrates that it can be done; however, it seems that we are not living up to the challenge.

At the same time we should also remember that, “at the end of the day, any transformation, justice and peace will be because God made it so. We are not the authors of change, nor its primary actors” (Meyers, 1999:121). We would do well to remind ourselves that we are privileged partakers in God’s work.
Chapter 8: The Way Forward

This chapter summarizes and concludes the insights gained from the previous chapters, in order to give direction to helpers’ efforts at undertaking missions with the destitute. All these insights are then linked to the model developed in chapter 5. While, as remarked earlier, no model is perfect, a good model will serve to guide endeavours, and to make those more effective. This is also true of missions with the destitute.

1 Introduction

In my undertaking of research for this study, the severe lack of coordination, skill, insight and resources allocated in efforts to help destitute people in the South African context became evident. At the same time the problems associated with poverty and destitution in this country are growing to alarming proportions, which necessitates an immediate response that currently seems to be minimal. Thankfully there are exceptions to this, certain organizations that shine like beacons of hope as they do missions with the destitute. We, helpers, and especially helpers in this country, need to develop better ways of doing such missions: the proposed model is a step in that direction.

It also became clear that very few helpers purposefully use an approach to missions with the destitute that simultaneously incorporates both an inside-out and an outside-in approach.

Against this background, let us consider the way forward for missions that empower destitute people towards SHALOM.

2 Understand the complexity of the problems faced by destitute people

In Chapter two it became clear that destitution, and the problems faced by destitute people, are complex and varied. Yet these difficulties share a commonality in that all of them would seem almost insurmountable to the destitute. Some will be within destitute people’s abilities to address, most often with the right kind of help being provided as a prerequisite. But often these problems are of a kind and scope that are impossible for
destitute people to overcome. Unless: dysfunctional societal systems are challenged and addressed; helpers speak on behalf of the silent voices of the destitute; the destitute are given voices of their own that are heard where they count; the destitute are reconnected into communities of care that possess collective strengths.

These problems are caused by many different factors, all of which interact dynamically in the lives of destitute people to create a downward spiral that traps people in the “poverty cycle”. Consequently real missions with the destitute must address all these dynamically interacting issues, causes and factors involved in destitution as holistically and comprehensively as possible, in order to empower destitute people effectively. This immediately leads to the realization that no single person or organization can do this alone: the problems of destitute people and destitution simply exist on too large a scale. Helpers need one another; we need to coordinate our efforts better. The model proposed could assist in two ways: (1) by helping helpers to evaluate their own effort, and determining how holistic and comprehensive those efforts are; and (2) by helping helpers to focus their efforts on specific parts of the model, so that other helpers can focus on other parts, in this way creating more specialized efforts of higher quality that should be more effective overall.

Efforts at missions with the destitute must also take into consideration the fact that different approaches will be needed to tackle the different problems involved in destitution. These approaches are developed in chapter two in terms of two categories, namely (1) approaches that will deal with the problems (causes, issues and factors) involved in destitution that function mostly from inside the individual; and (2) approaches that will address the problems (causes, issues and factors) involved in destitution that function mostly from outside the person. From these two categories more specific strategies are developed in chapter 6 and chapter 7 that will enable one to do missions with the destitute in ways that empower them from the “inside-out”, as well as from the “outside-in”.

317
3 Understand the obligation upon us as helpers
Whereas chapter 2 focuses on exploring the different problems involved in destitution, chapter 3 stresses the urgent obligation upon helpers to become involved in missions with the destitute.

Three very important insights emerge from this chapter. Firstly, we as helpers must do missions with the destitute, not to them. Secondly, we do not take SHALOM to destitute people, but rather discover SHALOM with them, in this way empowering people to experience ever greater degrees of the SHALOM which God intended. Thirdly, missions with the destitute always involve reciprocal conversion, where helpers are constantly “converted” while their own viewpoints, beliefs and practices are challenged by their experiences with destitute people.

Much attention is given to the kind of missions we should be involved in as helpers when we do missions with the destitute. It is important to understand this, since our understanding of missions with the destitute affects our inherent drive to be involved with the destitute in ways that empower them. This type of mission must:

• flow from the Missio Dei, where we understand that we are active participants in a much larger mission, namely God’s mission. As helpers, we become instruments in God’s hands as He incarnates His mission of love to people, bringing SHALOM into people’s lives.

• cause us as helpers to become “church with others”. The basic concept is that helpers do not function as a church for the poor or the destitute that reaches out to them in a one-way fashion; but that the latter become part of the church in every sense of the word, an active part of a missionary community: therefore the church becomes church with them.

• drive us to aim for comprehensive salvation which addresses personal sin, but also the sinfulness of a broken world that itself breaks people. This kind of salvation urges helpers to minister to the destitute in their total need, both in terms of individual need and the need of society regarding destitution; soul and body; present and future.
• promote a quest for justice. As such our missions must constantly advocate social justice by actively working for a world where love, peace and a community of brothers and sisters, openness and self surrender to God, will be less difficult.

• contain evangelism as an inherent part, where evangelism is seen as part of the broader obligation of missions with the destitute. Evangelism is then perceived as mediating the good news of God’s love in Christ that transforms life, proclaiming, by word and action, that Christ has set us free.

• promote liberation, where our missions manifest God’s preferential option for the poor by demonstrating an intimate solidarity with suffering people.

• provide hope in action, where the destitute are made aware of Godly possibilities where previously there had been none. In this regard as helpers we must create hope by choosing to do so on the basis of what God has done and is still doing today.

• involve prophetic dialogue. This simply means that helpers involved in missions with the destitute must be part of a community that not only gives of itself in the service of the world and its cultures but also learns from its involvement and expands its imagination.

It should be clear that this kind of missions approaches people from both the “inside-out”, and from the “outside-in”.

The kind of missions needed to empower destitute people necessitates a different kind of church, where helpers function as the “public church”, a “church of the market plain” that meets destitute people where they are, on the street and in gutters, and empowers them there. Such a church is foreign to the prevalent ideas of “church” in our society, yet we need to become one if we want to empower destitute people towards SHALOM. The obligation and calling are clear!

4 Grow in understanding of destitute people
As we do missions with destitute people, we need to grow in our understanding of the people with whom we journey, in order to help them better to be empowered. At the
same time the manner in which we perceive destitute people will directly influence the way we do missions with them.

We have little hope of “connecting” to them, or of engaging them, if we possess no understanding of who they are and what they experience. Chapter 4 explores this matter in considerable detail, borrowing many insights from the social sciences.

A strong case is made for a viewpoint from which one grows to see the destitute as individual people with dignity, needs, strengths and feelings; people experiencing destitution with all its negative connotations that break down their personhood. The destitute are people trapped in the ugly realities of the poverty cycle, where they experience different kinds of powerlessness and ill-being that negate the experience of SHALOM.

A key for empowering destitute people is to view them as people created by God (therefore possessing innate dignity), with strengths which must be discovered, and then used to empower destitute people. This approach literally means that everything helpers do in their mission with the destitute will be predicated, in some way, on helping to discover and embellish, explore and exploit people’s strengths and resources, in the service of assisting them to achieve their goals, realize their dreams, and shed the irons of their own inhibitions and misgivings. In this way their own strengths are harnessed to help them grow towards SHALOM.

Some of these strengths could be the different ways in which destitute people experience God. Helpers can build on these experiences as they work with destitute people to empower them.

5 Doing missions with the destitute by creating a continuum of empowering care
Chapters 5-7 flesh out a model and strategies that provide “guidelines” for the praxis of missions with the destitute. These guidelines are intended to offer greater intentionality and focus to helpers’ efforts in empowering the destitute towards SHALOM.
A comprehensive model was proposed, which can be developed step by step. Using the model as a foundation, the guidelines and strategies developed in chapters 5-7 can now be drawn together. Please follow the numbers indicated on the model as the threads are drawn together.

**Missions with the destitute: A continuum of empowering care**

- **God at work with people**
- **Informal engagement**
  - The “whole people of God” reaching out - befriending the destitute with God’s love
- **Inside-out empowerment**
- **Missionary action to prevent destitution**
- **Empowerment towards SHALOM**
- **Outside-in empowerment**
- **Missionary action to heal destitute people**
- **Missionary action to keep people from becoming destitute again**
- **Formal engagement**
  - Missions with the destitute manifested through specialized professional services and interventions
1 Missionary action of three kinds

In this model, missionary actions of three possible kinds are distinguished: helpers could be involved in one kind of action, and focus their efforts on this, or a combination of them. They include:

- Missionary action to prevent people from becoming destitute
  This would include actions such as advocacy, social justice action, actions that strengthen communities towards achieving sustainable livelihoods and any other kinds of action that would make it more difficult for people in our context to become destitute.

- Missionary action to heal destitute people
  Actions that prevent destitution will not directly affect people who are already destitute. Therefore we need actions that will assist destitute people to heal and become whole again – in this way empowering them towards SHALOM. These could encompass actions such as outreach and engagement that build trust and instil hope; the fostering of social ties that will promote being part of a community of care; “motivating change”; the healing of people’s inner pictures; the development of new beliefs; services such as health care, reconnection to housing and employment etc.

- Missionary action to stop people from becoming destitute again.
  These might include actions such as giving a voice to destitute people that promotes ownership and involvement in their own continued growth and development.

2 Empower towards SHALOM

The aim of our missionary actions (doing missions with…) is to empower destitute people towards SHALOM, where they will grow, change and develop so as to experience a greater degree of this SHALOM on a personal level. The meaning of SHALOM was discussed intensively in Chapter 3.
It is important to remind ourselves as helpers that we do not bring SHALOM to the destitute as if it is not already there among them; rather, we “unveil” or reveal SHALOM by discovering ways in which SHALOM has manifested, is currently manifesting and should manifest, past, present and future, together with the destitute, in our world – all this simply because God is ahead of us, already at work where we are going. This, to my mind, furnishes the correct perspective on SHALOM as the aim and goal of missions that empower destitute people.

**Missions with the destitute**

We are involved in missions “with” people, not “to” them or “for” them. This means we journey with people, and in this process of reciprocal influencing, reciprocal conversion takes place.

**“Inside-out” and “outside-in” empowerment**

These encompass strategies for missions with the destitute that operate to empower destitute people from the inside-out (as discussed in chapter 6), and strategies that function to empower destitute people from the outside-in. The purpose of both internal and external empowerment is to prevent destitution, heal destitute people, and keep them from becoming destitute again. In this way internal and external empowerment constitute part of all the three kinds of missionary action in which helpers can engage, as was discussed above. Internal and external empowerment overlap, as was discussed in Chapters 2, 6 and 7.

Internal empowerment refers to missions with the destitute from the inside-out, which focuses on the internal empowerment of individual destitute people, and on the processes involved or linked to this type of empowerment. It implies approaches that will enable
helpers to empower destitute people to become whole, grow, change and develop on the inside, so that they will become self-motivated to alter their own lives on the outside (inside-out). It will encompass strategies, outreach and engagement that engender trust and instil hope; the fostering of social ties that will promote being part of a community of care; “motivating change”; the healing of people’s inner pictures; the development of new beliefs.

On the other hand external empowerment denotes strategies and interventions that will empower destitute people by creating an external environment or situation that should enable them to grow, change, develop and become whole, as they choose to. Missions with the destitute from the “outside-in” deals with issues mostly outside of destitute people’s direct control, therefore “external” to them, such as access to housing, or clinical services, or access to empowering communities, or advocating social justice, and a number of other issues. Missions from the outside-in can roughly be divided into two categories, namely (1) clinical services and (2) community development approaches, which may overlap.

Social services include services (whether lay or formal) that reconnect people to housing, employment, communities of care, clinical services such as health care and services aimed at successfully reintegrating destitute people into society (like CTI).

Community development approaches centre on the empowerment of communities, so that these can take better care of their people, and even become a safe harbour for destitute people introduced into those communities. This goal is achieved by means of different strategies focused on community empowerment towards sustainable livelihoods, such as Asset Based Community Development, and efforts to take care of the environment.

Engaging in missionary action both informally and formally
Helpers should be aware of, and foster engagement in missionary actions that empower destitute people towards SHALOM in both informal and formal ways.

Engagement simply refers to the process where helpers facilitate, advocate and catalyze the process of transformation so that destitute people can become empowered.

Informal engagement should be perceived as the “public church” taking action to do missions with the destitute, in other words where the “whole community of God”, meaning specifically Christians who are not practising professionally in the social sciences etc. and other members of the church, become involved in missions with the destitute. They reach out and befriend destitute people with God’s love (in whatever way is appropriate). Consequently trust develops, relationships are built, hope is instilled, and destitute people become more open to be empowered. Possibilities for this informal engagement could include finding destitute people on the street and then providing necessary goods (such as food), or undertaking other actions that may assist helpers to connect with destitute people. Once trust develops, helpers could start offering the possibilities of other services, and can then link destitute people to those services, which would be termed formal engagement.

Formal engagement refers to endeavours by specialized professionals which are aimed at empowering the destitute and which might include organizations, specialized individuals such as social workers or medical professionals, or counsellors. Often people will be referred to this kind of help, or they might be “taken by the hand” through informal engagement into more specialized (formal) empowerment agencies.

This would include services like reconnection to housing; clinical services, services that help destitute people reintegrate into society in successful and sustainable ways, reconnection to employment, and health care. Any professional services needed to empower destitute people to function better can be termed “formal”.
Part of this engagement will encompass the fostering of helpers’ competencies, as discussed in chapter 6. The purpose of this is to make sure that helpers adhere to and practise good values when engaging people in order to help them, so that those helpers (whether lay people engaging informally in missions with the destitute or specialized professionals engaging formally) can influence clients without robbing them of self-responsibility (or dignity, or personhood).

As helpers, we are acting within the greater sphere of God at work with people, we are part of His mission, we are involved in missions (meaning that we attempt to engage destitute people in God’s way, as best we understand that way now). Helpers should take courage from this, for it is still God that empowers helpers, it is still God who goes out before us, it is still God who truly changes lives – we are but participants in what God is doing.

6 Conclusion
The challenge of empowering destitute people towards SHALOM is immense, and far too great a task to be accomplished by any one person or organization. “Creating a continuum of empowering care” for destitute people will undoubtedly call for continued and combined efforts by many role-players. However, as people who love God and feel the urgency of the call to be involved in His mission, we have no choice but to go where He leads, and to journey there as effectively as possible. Even though the task of empowering destitute people may seem overwhelming, may there never be any doubt that we are called to “…preach good news to the poor, …proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, (and) to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor” (Luke 4:18-19, Amplified).
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