

A Research Paper

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Abstract

This paper will first attempt to display a theology of homes or shelters throughout the Bible. It will examine how God has cared for all people to have shelter and particularly the foreigners or strangers in a land. We will examine this theology from the Old Testament and New Testament. Next, this paper will attempt to create a holistic model of building and providing homes to foreigners within Paterson, New Jersey. Then it will continue to try to see if this model could be a nation wide model. This model hinges on connecting churches and non-profit organizations to provide the foreigners, strangers, and refugees in our land with homes.

I. Introduction

Holistic missions must be defined first to understand the goal of this paper. However, many times we can learn things by what it is not. Holistic missions is not evangelism and it is not missions. It is both. Evangelism is defined today as the act of proclaiming the gospel to people who have not put their faith in Jesus Christ. Missions is defined often as everything the church does in action. Usually referring to ministries, humanization projects, and planting churches in foreign lands. Therefore, to put these two words simply, most people define evangelism as proclamation and missions as social action. The argument presented in this paper is that the church must not choose one or the other but must do both. Both are required to fulfill the great commission of the church. When we see these two words as pitted against each other then we end up helping only fifty percent of a person or people. We are being only half obedient to God. In an article by Hannes Winher, he concludes holistic missions this way,

“Overall, the biblical record assures us that the different dimensions of Christian witness are all important. Words explain being and actions, and the latter confirm the words. At the same time, the preoccupation of the Bible with the eternal destiny of man, and the liberty of God and of his envoys in their choice of communicative strategies, should orient our understanding of evangelism and mission” (Wiher 13).

God has never been just a talker but an action taker. Holistic mission is wrapped up in the incarnation of Christ. The Father spoke the good news of the New Covenant to us and The Word responded as Isaiah did “Here am I, send me”(Isaiah 6:8) and The Word became flesh and we now refer to Him as Jesus Christ. God has always been on holistic mission proclaiming and acting in humanity. In the book of James it says, “In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.” (James 2:17). Therefore, holistic mission is ensuring the proclamation of the gospel and social action going hand and hand like Jesus coming in “grace and in truth” (John 1:17).

I will attempt in this paper to set the stage of providing homes/shelters from a theological standpoint first. By presenting the theological argument, it will then give the church the understanding of why we should take action in providing these homes. Next, the plan will present the social action on how to logistically answer the call of God to create homes for strangers in our land. Finally, the conclusion will allow one to see the holistic mission of how proclaiming the gospel and creating homes for foreigners in Paterson, NJ is possible.

II. A Theology of Homes

1. Biblical Definition of Home: The Bible throughout has displayed God’s care for all people to have homes. I would define a home according to Bible this way, “*Any building or land a person or family occupies.*” Now, I know this definition can be argued but based on how the Bible uses the description of land, buildings, and people, I was able to create this simple

definition. This definition can be broken down into two parts, one being the person or family and the other being the physical structure or land. In the Old Testament, God has always referred to humanity as three main nouns. These three are as a wife (Isiah 54:5-7), sons & daughters (Hosea 1:10), and servants/ friends (Isaiah 41: 8-10). All of these titles are family structured titles especially servants. A biblical servant was a willing slave who joined the household of another in service and would benefit from the home of their master.

The second part of the definition is land and homes. The promised land is defined as the place or country in which Israel dwells; the place where their ancestors dwell or dwelt (Genesis 12:1-3). The physical home is defined as the house in which one lives or the house in which one lives with his family (Isaiah 65:21). These biblical definitions are important because logically you see why homes matter. All people deserve the right to have shelter and land to dwell in. A quote by Jiri Dosoudil read:

The Lord, who Himself takes care of the oppressed (Ps. 12:5; 35:10; Prov 22:22–23; Mal. 3:5),²⁰ does not distinguish whether the oppressed is a local, a foreigner, or anyone else. When people are in need, their dignity is to be protected, regardless of their cultural, religious, or other backgrounds – for ‘those who oppress the poor insult their Maker’ (Prov 14:31; cf. 17:5) (Dosoudil 5).

All families need the protection of a shelter day in and day out for survival. A home is one of the most precious possessions any human being can have. According to Maslow's Hierarchy of need, the Physiological needs which consists of food, shelter, and clothing is the foundational motivation for all people (McLeod). If one does not have a shelter, food, or clothing there is no higher motivation. If Maslow knows that humanity needs this, it would be an insult to think God does not know the importance of this far more.

Therefore, who are the people in every a land that not having shelters and homes affects the most? The answer is foreigners, strangers and refugees. These people groups are the most likely to worry about their physiological needs everyday. When a country or nation makes it hard for these people to have homes then by default it is hard for them to survive or succeed. As the church, we must see God's heart for the basic physiological needs of foreigners and refugees in our cities.

2. Old Testament theology of God providing homes/land for foreigners: God has provided a home for the refugee and stranger since the fall of humanity. God in His infinite wisdom knew the moment sin entered the world these people would be the most vulnerable to these basic needs. I will do a quick historical fly over of the timeline for the Old Testmant.

God demonstrates His provision of homes for this marginalized group by first establishing a Land of Promise or Home. This is important because God had to establish a home/land as a starting point. The saying goes if you aim at everything you end up hitting nothing. Israel was to be the starting light to all nations. So, God started with a Land and then He called a foreigner named Abraham to live in it and occupy it with his family. Next, the family would dwell there for three generations; Abraham, Issac and Jacob, before this family became refugees, seeking food during a famine, in the land of Egpyt. As they were foreigners in Egpyt they grew to be an entire nation, however, the Lord had to free Israel from Egpyt because Egpyt turned them the refugees into slaves. God decided to punish Egpyt for how they mistreated the foreigners in their land. After they were freed, God sent them back home to Israel where they would dwell for most of the Old Testament moving forward.

Now as Israel were first foreigners and then refugees and now back home, God started to establish something called the Law. This was to show Israel how to live in their home and

proclaim the Good news of God to the world. The Law set Israel apart as a nation like no other nation. Their laws did not come from man but from God himself. Therefore, we must take into great consideration the verse that should follow because it declares God's rules but His heart behind them as well. The first Bible verse is from Leviticus 19:34 "The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God." God calls the people of Israel to follow the golden rule with foreigners in their land. I think this means if native people want homes then we should care for the foreigners to have homes too. The next verse clearly displays God's heart for foreigners to have land. It says,

21 "You are to distribute this land among yourselves according to the tribes of Israel. 22 You are to allot it as an inheritance for yourselves and for the foreigners residing among you and who have children. You are to consider them as native-born Israelites; along with you they are to be allotted an inheritance among the tribes of Israel. 23 In whatever tribe a foreigner resides, there you are to give them their inheritance," declares the Sovereign Lord (Ezekiel 47:21-23).

The people of God in the Old Testament were to treat every foreigner in every tribe with a right to an inheritance of land. We must not overlook the radical nature of these two verses amongst many more in the Old Testament. The stranger was always treated with dehumanizing degradation. Yet the true and living God called his people to embrace the stranger, love them like themselves and provide them with land to establish their homes. Everytime Israel turned away from this command a prophet was always there to remind them that His law required not just sacrifices and fasting, but love for the stranger, orphans and widows. In Isaiah he says,

"No, this is the kind of fasting I want: Free those who are wrongly imprisoned; lighten the burden of those who work for you. Let the oppressed go free, and remove the

chains that bind people. 7 Share your food with the hungry, and give shelter to the homeless. Give clothes to those who need them, and do not hide from relatives who need your help” (Isaiah 58:6-7).

God’s holistic mission of us being devoted to Him in spirit always produces actions of compassion for the weak around us. God even argues in this verse, I rather you stop fasting and provide shelter for the homeless. God’s heart for land and homes to the refugees and strangers is clear in the Old Testmaent. Therefore, what is clearly shown in the Old Testament is usually revealed with greater emphasis in the New Testament.

3. New Testament theology of the church is called to create homes: The new covenant is all about changing the identity of all strangers, foreigners, and refugees into the children of God. A theme of the NT welcomes them into the house of God. Jesus came and “to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God-” (John 1:12). The new covenant is about restoring all people to their rightful home. God in the Old Testament centralized His effort to give strangers a home through Israel. But the goal was always to decentralize this effort and call all children of faith to come home and receive their heavenly inheritance. It was through one man, Adam, we all became strangers in need of refuge and it is through one man Christ Jesus that we have become inheritors and natives of God’s kingdom (Romans 5:16-19). God constantly reminded the Israelites to treat all foreigners with love because they were first foreigners themselves. God called the Israelites to give their foreigners an inheritance of the Land, so Jesus also came to turn all strangers of heaven into inheritors of it. Jesus came to call us to remember, that all humanity was kicked out of the Garden of Eden for disobedience and in the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus restored our ability to go to our true homes through His obedience.

Jesus gives us a story to help us understand his command to love our strangers. He says, 35 For I was hungry, and you fed me. I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger, and you invited me into your home. (Matthew 25:35). This verse in the larger story implies that when we care for the stranger and invite them into our home, we are doing it unto Jesus. Our obedience to welcoming the stranger is upgraded in the New Testament from law to relationship. The church is no longer just obeying a rule but is relationally loving a stranger and Jesus simulatenously.

Finally, the New Testament teaches another concept I will present of the importance of homes. The eternal kingdom has homes awaiting the children of Faith. Jesus in some of his final words to His disciples says,

“Don’t let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, and trust also in me. 2 There is more than enough room in my Father’s home.[a] If this were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you?[b] 3 When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am. (John 14:1-3).

Jesus describes all believers as The Father’s children! Jesus uses language in this verse to show that before we go to heaven to be with Him, Jesus speaks as our bridegroom, who is building homes for His bride. If Jesus is building our homes in heaven and we were strangers, foreigners, and refugees, then I think we should build homes on earth for these people until Jesus comes again.

III. Holistic Model for creating homes for strangers, foreigners, refugees

1. Non-profit Plan: The idea is to create a non-profit organization that provides homes for the marginalized foreigners in Paterson, New Jersey.

a. Non-Profit Name

The organization would be called the “Father’s House” for multiple reasons but the biggest being all religions tend to not fear the name Father as God. This is not to say I’m ashamed of Jesus in any way but sometimes reaching people where they are requires a spirit that is gentle like a dove and wise as a serpent.

b. Plan

To create a non-profit that would be completely separate from the church in 501(c) 3 status. The non profit being a separate entity creates many more advantages for government funding, taxes, and protection for the church. The next step is for the non-profit to be solely a property managing company that only finds and manages renters, while also fixing and maintaining the building facilities.

The non-profit would hire two main branches of employers. The first employers would be property managers who handle all administrative work for tenants, leases, and showing apartments for potential tenants. The second employers would be maintenance workers who handle all building repairs, maintenance, landscaping, and remodeling. The two branches would be the pillars of the non-profit organization. The other aspect to these employers would be specifically trying to hire foreigners, strangers, and refugees to work these jobs. We would look for immigrants who are interested in business management and construction work. The purpose of hiring these specific people is because they most likely will be bilingual and relatable to the tenants we are looking to provide homes for.

The next part of this plan is to identify our target market for cities, tenants, and owners of residential properties. First, we will model the theology of God in the OT by centralizing our efforts to one city. This plan's figurative promise land for foreigners will be the city of Paterson.

This conclusion was based off three aspects. The first reason is Paterson is the third highest city in New Jersey where immigrants or potential tenants are flocking to for settlement (Astudillo).

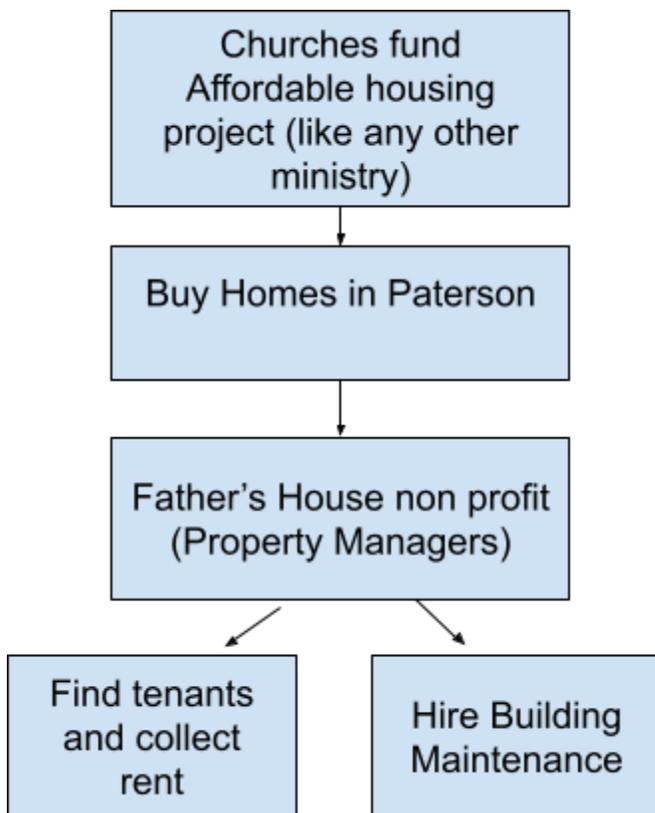
According to the 2020 census, Paterson has experienced a staggering 9% population growth. The increase in population means more federal funding to invest in the city's public services and infrastructure. The city is also very diverse: approximately 40% of its residents are foreign-born. Paterson's welcoming vibe and multi-cultural population attract a diverse range of residents. (2020 Census (Pavic)).

The second reason for choosing Paterson, is because price is still low. According to Casa Real Properties, a New Jersey major real estate investor, they write,

Investors look for real estate markets with plenty of affordable options when housing prices skyrocket. According to Zillow, as of July 2021, the median price of homes in Paterson was \$370,145. Top NJ developers have already invested in multiple building projects across the city. The Paterson market is ripe with plenty of affordable properties, so investors have many great options. (Pavic).

Lastly, the city of Paterson is closest to my local church and network of wealthy churches, in Bergen and Passaic County, who are looking for missional opportunities in the city of Paterson. In my local church community, we have dozens of financial managers, realtors, and investors who are well educated in these topics.

The logistical aspect of this plan is how this will help provide foreigners with homes for an affordable rate. If the local churches surrounding Paterson purchased the properties, they would all be homes purchased as non taxable assets for these churches. This would allow the real estate properties to be protected by non taxed assets because of the 501(c) 3 benefits. No taxes and no mortgage will be an expensive upfront cost but a cheap rent price since they are only



trying to regain their initial capital. Due to these houses being cheaper, the rent can be affordable and potentially paid for by section 8 governmental housing funds (there may need to be more fulfilled requirements to attain section 8 funding). The churches would lease the homes by hiring the non-profit called “The Father’s House” as the property managers for all of their properties. The non-profit would hire immigrants as property managers, building maintenance, and find tenants and collect rent for their properties. These affordable homes would target foreigners, refugees, and the poor in the city of Paterson. See Diagram for visual picture of plan.

Lastly, how does this plan holistically tie in proclamation of the gospel and social action to create a holistic mission. These churches being the asset holders of the properties would bridge the gap between believers and foreigners in Paterson, New Jersey. These churches would be connecting strangers to homes while simultaneously providing foreigners with jobs. Now, the gospel will not be out right preached in the formal sense but there will be opportunities to show the love of Christ through casual conversations and daily living. The churches would be invited to attend tenant socials like bbqs or holiday gatherings put on by the property managers. Finally, they would partner with an organization called Servants Heart in Paterson which focuses on creating welders, electricians, and construction workers while also teaching them the gospel (“History - Servant's Heart Ministry Ministry”). Servants Heart would be the pool of hires for the non-profit. So, most likely when a home needs repair a Christian trade worker would be

answering the door and interacting with the tenant. The initial goal is for a believer from the church to be the CEO of the non-profit organization “The Father’s House” with a goal to promote from within.

6. Bridging the Church and Non-profit:

I think the church today must adjust to being able to connect with or create non-profits to ensure they are able to maximize their holistic missions. The church, due to its religious background has to be able to impact the world and non-profits allow for social action with the most freedom. A non-profit organization removes the religious boundaries the government puts on them as an organization but it does not limit the witness of believers who run them. The believers of local churches can get involved with non-profits and through casual conversation and following Jesus’ example, we will be able to be the salt and light of the world.

Conclusion: God clearly has the heart to care for the physiological needs of strangers in a land. He called Israel to be the first nation that embraced foreigners and gave them an inheritance of land and homes. Then God called all strangers of heaven to inherit the kingdom of God and occupy heavenly homes because of the work of Jesus. Now I pray the church would see that we should still work hard at answering the call to give homes to all strangers in every nation. No country has zero immigrants, therefore, we can show them the love of God and obey God’s command by welcoming all foreigners in our cities, countries, and world into the Father's House!

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