

Your Conscience Speaks:

Recommendations for a CCD Decision-Making Model and Code of Ethics

Northwest University

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Author's Note & Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to all who have been a part of my own ethical development and life story.

To those who have demonstrated to me right from wrong, shown me how to love all people deeply, and most importantly taught me that God is both a just and merciful God.

I understand my need for His unending love, justice and mercy more every day.

Thank you to my husband, Trey, who has believed in me since the moment we met, has read all of my papers, and inspires me to be passionate about everything I do.

Thank you to my parents who instilled the deeply rooted values of ethics and justice in me at a young age – to advocate for those unable to advocate for themselves, to always stand up for right over wrong, and to do all things as unto God.

Lastly, this thesis is dedicated to those who have experienced deep hurt by anyone from a community of faith. I acknowledge your hurt and apologize for your pain. You have not experienced this alone. There are still many people in faith communities who seek God's justice creating love each day and are bringing healing to the communities in which we reside.

You are invited to join us on this journey.

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Introduction

Today more than ever community development actions are being evaluated as right or wrong. This is true not only “in the sphere of human activity in history, but also in humanity's relationship to the whole of nature” (Raiser 8). The Christian Church is under this same scrutiny, leading to an internal and external struggle of ethical judgment for faith-based organizations engaged in community development. Some individuals in this field may wholeheartedly agree with changes of ethical behavior that need to be made in practice and academia, while others may have an underlying sense of defiance or apathy regarding the change. While there will never be an overarching ethical answer for every situation a Christian community development (CCD) practitioner could encounter in every culture, it is each CCD practitioner's responsibility to weigh the cost of daily decisions and belief patterns and consider the perspectives of those around them.

Many organizations adhere to a Code of Conduct to guide staff members' behavior. A code of ethics and a code of conduct are similar in outlining behavioral expectations, but a code of ethics provides guidance when faced with ethical dilemmas. If a community development practitioner is not having to choose between two or more ethical principles and/or values, then they are not being faced with an ethical dilemma. Community development as “practice, as social movement, academic discipline, and legal service could be enhanced by articulating new guiding principles applicable to communities across the country” (Alexandre et. al 219). A Code of Ethics tailored to Christian community development organizations will address ethical ambiguity in each organizations' attempts to serve alongside various communities.

Community development as a field is faced with challenges including continuity of services, long-term sustainability, social and legal injustices, and ethical ambiguity. To date, the

field of community development within the United States does not have an overarching code of ethics, instead many codes of conduct specific to each organization leave the field underserved. Without a specific code of ethics for the field of community development, practitioners may struggle or feel directionless when faced with an ethical dilemma. However, change is possible. A Community Development Code of Ethics tailored to Christian organizations will help overcome cognitive dissonance and impart guidance when a practitioner must choose between two or more ethical principles or values. Drawing on lessons learned through a case study at ABC Community Services¹, this thesis will identify what and why of Christian ethics, an ethical decision-making model, and outcomes of a Community Development Code of Ethics. Finally, this thesis concludes with a Community Development Code of Ethics Primer to provide accountability and guidance to practitioners in the field and academia.

Fieldwork Context

The fieldwork experience for this thesis took place at ABC Community Services (ABC), a newly launched community development corporation under the ABC multi-campus church located in Southwest Missouri. ABC as a whole, affiliated with the Assemblies of God denomination, engages in both community development and church planting. While at surface level it appears ABC Community Services' ultimate goal is to end poverty and promote holistic well-being for at-risk individuals and families, there is a second motivation for the formation of ABC Community Services.

¹ The names of interviewees and the case study organization have been changed for their protection and to maintain the integrity of their employment and the organization's reputation.

Within the church branch of this organization, ABC church leadership holds the goal of planting 360 churches in the state of Missouri. Once 360 churches have been planted in Missouri, the goal is to plant 3,600+ churches within the United States, all under the ABC name. Upon initial review, it appears that ABC programming is simply an added perk of the large church planting organization according to church leadership. However, this organizational hierarchy is often misleading. Both branches of ABC are currently kept semi-separate in operations, but the nonprofit organization must adhere to the expectations tied to the organization's church planting vision. This requirement festers confusion and an overall lack of clarity in goals and daily operations for staff and volunteers of the nonprofit organization. A primary confusion-driving factor is many ABC staff members are also considered "campus pastors" at any given church campus location. These campus pastors are paid from grants on behalf of the nonprofit but serve in both roles. This has become a leading ethical concern for many staff members as the majority of funding is from federal grants. Instead of planting churches that are equipped to do localized Christian community development, ABC church is using the nonprofit community development organization as a guise to reach their church planting goals. A clear, biblically based framework is needed for ABC to overcome the cognitive dissonance and ethical ambiguity in which they are currently engaged. Should ABC Community Services recognize the serious issues in their organization and genuinely take action to change, they must ask themselves: To what end are we willing to go to reach our church planting potential? Who will be hurt in the process?

Reflexivity

Church-based community development is dear to my heart. Historically, faith-based communities were the first to respond to crises and systemic issues plaguing our communities. Unfortunately, “many of our communities have been neglected and left to deteriorate for decades” and the Church has, at best, been an observer of this process (CCDA Philosophy). Today “the desperate conditions of the poor call for a revolution in the church’s approach to the problem,” but many do not know where to start or begin by jumping to action with ignorance (CCDA Philosophy). This ignorance may lead to hurt of the communities that churches seek to help as well as the hurt of dedicated parishioners. I have personally experienced hurt in the Church due to a lack of moral and ethical accountability in practice. These catalytic experiences have led me to prioritize ethics in my own life. Catalytic events compel us to “move from the isolation and stagnation of life in homogenous groups and break through into a new reality that introduces us to something we have never experienced before” (Salter McNeil 49). The Christian perspective says the Christian Church should set the standard for all organizations, secular and faith-based alike, in the utmost ethical behavior. In other words, “we are called to swim against the stream, at personal cost, and without expectation of understanding and appreciation. That is a serious and authentic way of bearing a cross” (Cobb 121). Christians are called to stand apart from the ethical ambiguity demonstrated in both faith-based and secular organizations.

The Christian Community Development Code of Ethics Primer was conceived from my personal experiences as well as my fieldwork experience to which I was connected by a former adjunct instructor. Our community in Southwest Missouri is abundant in churches and community development organizations seeking to address issues of poverty, homelessness, unemployment, malnutrition, addiction, and a lack of educational opportunities, yet these issues

still run rampant as many of these programs are short-lived for a variety of reasons, including ethical scandals and poor management. As the ethical decision-making model and code of ethics attached at the end of this document imply, it is necessary for community development organizations to practice awareness and seek objective analysis of their programming and daily decisions thus adhering to a stronger ethic. The code will be an ethical starting point for my own professional and personal journey, and it is my hope that it will guide others, including ABC Community Services, to prevent harm and increase the holistic wellbeing of communities and human lives.

Research

In February 2020, I interviewed two ABC Community Services (ABC) employees for my Social Entrepreneurship and Research courses. In March 2020, I identified ABC as a potential fieldwork site. Once approved for fieldwork at ABC, I began qualitative research as a participant-observer that lasted from May 2020 to August 2020. Within this timeframe, I conducted fifteen (15) interviews with ABC staff and church staff. These interviews were semi-structured and primarily located off-site to encourage transparency. My participatory involvement in the organization consisted of sitting in on the weekly ABC team, all staff, and lead pastor meetings during which I led experiential and focus group activities. The group activity topics included communication, conflict, self-care, leadership, long-term goals, and values. The activities were interactive and included an action component and a discussion component each time. The action components incorporated surveys, hands-on team building, and artistic expression in various formats. Data from these activities was kept confidential except in discussion when the participating staff member shared their emotional, intellectual, or physical response to the activity. Participatory observation allowed for a more contextualized

understanding of the problems and strengths that were offered from the employees' own perspectives.

The initial research questions that were explored during fieldwork included:

1. How do you understand your role at ABC?
2. Does copowerment fit into ABC?
3. Does contextualization fit into ABC?
4. How does ABC manage conflict?
5. What does ABC define as their ethical guidelines?
6. What does ABC define as their core values?
7. How does ABC measure success?
8. Is this success more qualitative or quantitative in nature?
9. If you had a magic wand to fix anything at ABC, what would you do with it?

Qualitative research was necessary in the data collection for this thesis to grasp unique perspectives and sensory experiences that quantitative data or a survey-based study would not comprehensively provide by itself. Further, this qualitative study was one of applied research. Applied research is designed to “improve the quality of practice of a particular discipline” (Merriam and Tisdell 3). The qualitative data collected included observations, interviews, and guided activities with the ABC Community Services and ministry staff groups. The data gathered led to the thesis topic as the data did not appear saturated as expected after the completion of fifteen qualitative interviews (n=15), nine group sessions made of 7-40 people, and two observations per week for the four-month fieldwork time frame. Out of the fifteen interviews I conducted, not two people identified the same three top values or priorities for ABC as an organization. Rather, the data indicated ABC Community Services staff were entirely confused

about their mission. Simon Sinek advises leaders and organizations that “people don’t buy what you do; people buy why you do it” (04:31-04:36). When confusion and ambiguity of mission persists within the organization, a loss of community support is likely to follow which therefore compromises the margin of the entire organization. Further, many staff members did not feel comfortable with the cognitive dissonance they experience daily due to ethical dilemmas and conflicting values.

Ethical Problems in Context

Community development is a field that has existed for hundreds of years yet is so young in the development of itself. To this day, a standardized, widely accepted definition of community development does not exist. Instead, “the term *development* is heavily loaded with past meaning, not all of which is positive. When most people think of development, they think of material change or social change in the material world” (Myers 3). Community development means more than just an increase in material goods and deserves a stronger foundation than what currently exists. Unlike community development, “many professions operate under some form of ethical code, including lawyers, accountants, doctors, social workers, and economic development practitioners” (Alexandre et. al 221). Similar to the above fields, community development must be largely contextualized to a specific context or community in order to make a difference outside of academia. These other fields have gone before to show adherence to a standardized set of ethical values is possible, even among varying philosophies. Katie Willis notes, “numerous ideas about ‘development’ can co-exist, although some theories will be adopted more widely, partly because they are advocated or supported by more powerful actors” (29). However, this needed specificity has led practitioners to a place of discord on the foundational components of community development in practice. Our values inform the choices we make. When values are in

conflict, ethical discussions are necessary (Mitzen). As community development practitioners, “at our very core, there is the potential for ethical dilemmas, even when we do everything right” (Mitzen). Unfortunately, many ethical transgressions occur whether intentionally or ignorantly. A Christian Community Development Code of Ethics “will not erase these injustices overnight ... [but] can help generate sustainable [community development] outcomes to counter these and other inequitable realities” (Alexandre et. al 220).

While faith-based communities were once prominent in responding to crises and systemic issues plaguing our communities, many churches have firmly withdrawn from addressing these complicated issues. Para-church organizations, often known as faith-based nonprofits, have been created to fill the gap churches have left in communities (CCDA). It is often assumed simply because an organization is faith-based, they are acting ethically. When it emerges they are not acting ethically, it can be appalling to think someone could behave in that manner under God’s name. However, this may not be a fair response considering these faith-based organizations are faced with daily ethical dilemmas without a concise resource to assist in making decisions that impact the organization and their community. The Independent Sector believes “each and every organization ... should have a code of ethics” (1). Scripture is considered as a resource for guiding the behavior of Christian community development practitioners, but there are few resources that lay out the scriptural foundation for biblical ethics with included application. Occasionally these organizations are unethical and divisive from the beginning; other times these organizations are innocently ignorant to the damage that has been caused at their hands. A few examples of unethical behavior include, but are not limited to sexual abuse, misuse of funds, conflicts of interests, nepotism, bribes for services or funds, discrimination, kickbacks, coverups, price gouging, and deceptive advertising (CharityWatch; NonProfit Quarterly; and Ravelo) This

is not to say all organizations are malicious, but the scandals that have come forth in the past two decades cannot be ignored.

The growth of innovative approaches to community development has brought a “critical eye in recent years [that] has brought scrutiny from many stakeholders to the operations of nonprofit organizations” (Ito and Slatten 248). Kevin Lynch and Julius Walls, Jr. caution to “avoid the seduction of growth for growth’s sake. Grow *only* for the right reasons” (142). ABC Community Services (ABC) is not immune from this scrutiny or harmful behavior. While the leadership and staff of ABC have good intentions to strengthen communities, doing so in a way that does not appear to be integrous is a tremendous ethical problem. As Ernest Stringer guides, “the best of intentions, however, often run up against the cold, hard realities of daily life” (175). One employee, Jenny, shared “the downfall of growth so quickly is the people on the backside get buried ... no one knows the hierarchy chain ... The job descriptions and job titles that we were hired under don’t even apply for most of us anymore.” Billy added to this sentiment by saying, “can’t run as fast as they’re running ... And if this is how you treat people, they’re not going to donate [to your organization].” ABC Community Services employees have faced many challenges in attempting to fulfill their passions and calling to love their neighbor.

Joe, an ABC employee, said ABC leadership often “over promises and under delivers.” In his interview, he also identified issues of nepotism, disorganization, overworked employees, and gossip. On many occasions, Joe was given free rein to do various tasks, but after successful completion the responsibilities were taken away without an explanation. He shared, “I still don’t know like the exact line of communication of authority or who do I talk to or don’t really still know where this money is coming from ... like tomorrow if there was a stop on my check, I wouldn’t know how to track it down.” During the initial months of the global COVID-19

pandemic, Joe assisted with the USDA feeding program: “there were times when ABC workers could show up and pick up 60 meals and not give any information ... now that I understand that each meal was worth an X amount of dollars in the pocket of ABC, it seems like that doesn’t sound right.” Joe, who affiliated himself with the Baptist denomination, noted “the denomination of Assemblies of God seems to be really prevalent and just expected [that] you’d be a part of that or that’s how you believe, or else disagreements can arise pretty quickly. There’s definitely a feeling of like, just keep your mouth shut.” At the end of the interview, Joe summed up his concerns:

The day to day is like, let’s make people aware of ABC and its programs and what our brands can do to help them. And let’s make people aware of ABC, specifically, like donors and fundraising ... it seems like the goal is to make people aware of ABC so that they’ll get money. And then that money can go to make more buildings and make more ABC churches ... the trend I see for ABC, let’s make more programs for more building, and more name recognition. Yeah, more glory ... to put as many people as they can from the ABC insular community under the AG.

Joe’s experiences mirror many concerns brought up by multiple staff members in interviews.

Another employee, Billy, also noticed if you do not belong to the Assemblies of God denomination, you are not trusted in ABC.

A local pastor under ABC, Sally, described ABC’s approaches to community development and church planting as follows: “For the church planters that are planting churches in rural areas, to partner with ABC and to provide food programs partnering with local students and the community. I think that is a great way to earn their trust, and to build a relationship.” Sally and her church campus are not currently connected to ABC Community Services. She

notes ABC is “very community oriented, [finding] ways to serve underprivileged.” As a campus pastor, Sally asks herself: “does it fit our DNA? Because every context is different, each one of our congregations you serve at is different.” Sally notes, “in every work there’s a challenge, whether it is ministry or not ... Every church I believe, is going to be a transforming agent.”

ABC has taken a unique and appealing approach to community development and church planting as Sally shared. However, the overall ethics of the organization have been called into question by its own employees who emphasize the areas of ethical ambiguity Joe addressed, including false marketing, misuse of funds, and conflicts of interest. An appealing mission is not enough to sustain an organization or strengthen communities when working alongside them. ABC needs to either be forthright about their intentions by saying they are using community development to plant churches as a partnership between the nonprofit and the church-planting organization or change their mission and obliterate the enmeshment between the two organizations.

These examples above demonstrate the main perspectives gathered during the fieldwork experience at ABC. To increase ethical behavior, an organization “begins with ethical behavior toward its own employees, which means communication and a supportive environment that supports even whistle blowing, with all its potential for conflict” (Mitzen). Not only does ABC Community Services not have a pathway to report unethical behavior, but multiple employees identified not feeling safe to go to ABC leadership with questions or concerns. Many interviewees requested to remain anonymous for fear of retaliation. “Influences from outside the organization will have great impact on our development of organizational ethics” and for ABC Community Services, this impact largely comes from the Assemblies of God denomination (Mitzen).

Self-Awareness

This struggle of integrity and competence is an issue for all “in the handling of our own beliefs and values as we work respectfully and ethically with clients. Every single one of us comes to our work profoundly influenced by assumptions, beliefs, values, and commitments” (Sherwood 327). It is noteworthy that religion is an essential component of the moral behavior of any culture. For many Christians, faith is the largest assumption, belief, value, and commitment that is prioritized each day. The worldview we have each developed is not based on solely facts alone, but on experiences as well. We must have an internal sense of self-awareness to monitor this worldview and ensure it is adhering to ethical principles, faith-based or otherwise. As the saying goes, not every mountain is worth dying on. While we may believe a certain way, “it is not simply a matter of what I believe, but how I believe it, how I handle my beliefs, which in itself comes back around to the nature of my value commitments” (Sherwood 328). While imposing beliefs on another is unethical, “deliberately avoiding spiritual and religious issues is professional incompetence” (Sherwood 329). As Sherwood aptly reminds the CCD practitioner, “it is always ethical and appropriate to demonstrate the gospel to our clients, but it is seldom ethical to proclaim the gospel to them in our professional role” (329). It is important to note the key word of “seldom” in the above sentence; while often in a professional role it is not appropriate to evangelize, there may be occasions where it is not only appropriate, but beneficial to share a spiritual encounter with another. It is not possible to outline every possible circumstance where this may or may not be appropriate, which is why the biblical and ethical decision-making steps outlined later in this paper are both timely and useful.

Cross-Cultural Ethics

It is essential to acknowledge that actions deemed unethical in one culture, may be deemed ethical in another. In her book about the Hmong people, Anne Fadiman shares the story of Lia, a young girl who was caught in the trap between cultures and who lost her quality of life because of a cultural dilemma. When the Hmong people were transferred to the United States as refugees, the Western and Eastern cultures experienced an almost unbearable clash. The Americans thought the Hmong people were tribal and primitive. As seen with the Hmong, “many forms of cultural practice are regarded as an obstacle to development because they are considered to represent non-rational, collective, traditional ways of life, unsuited to individualistic capitalist development” (Willis 133). On the other hand, the Hmong people thought the Americans were cold-hearted and insensitive to the natural ways of the world and surrounding spirits. Fadiman states toward the end of her story she has “come to believe [Lia’s] life was ruined not by septic shock or noncompliant parents but by cross-cultural misunderstanding” (262). Fadiman’s story is a first-hand example when “different religions, cultures, societies, and individuals vary in the ways they determine what is ethical, and they often come to radically different conclusions regarding which behaviors and ideas should be endorsed and which should be censured” (Birmingham Theological Seminary). When the aspects of society clash, laypeople and community development practitioners alike jump to ethics. One group is right; one group is wrong.

For the sake of this thesis experience, the tools included are tailored to community development organizations within the United States. Should organizations take an international approach or focus on a country other than the United States, the Code of Ethics Primer attached to this thesis must be adapted to fit the context. If a community prefers their current way of life

over another, they “should be able to choose the way they want to live without being made to feel that they are somehow ‘inferior’ or ‘backward’ by not following a pattern that has been adopted elsewhere” (Willis 125-126). The community must have full autonomy and in community development “the agenda needs to be set by the communities involved, rather than outside agencies deciding on the priorities to be addressed and then working with local people to achieve them” (Willis 115). When we acknowledge that all communities are different and have different strengths, we will demonstrate love to one another more genuinely and effectively.

Who is Our Neighbor?

Loving our neighbor is easier said than done. According to Myers, we have five possible relationships: with ourselves, with community, with the “other,” with our environment, and with God (87). Loving our neighbor, as shown by Jesus in the Christian tradition, involves “whomever one’s life in some way impacts or whose life impacts one’s own” (Moe-Lobeda 177). We are encouraged to love not only those in our immediate proximity, but also those whom we have yet to meet. According to Charles Vogl, “the number of people who say that they have no one to talk to about difficult subjects has tripled in the last few decades” (xv). Studies have shown “social relationships have profound positive effects on our physical and mental health, longevity, and happiness. Loneliness kills, and the quality of our relationships matter” (Vogl xvi). These perspectives should make CCD practitioners consider: To what extent am I loving my neighbor?

For the Christian community development practitioner, “when the kingdom of God is genuinely placed first, ecological concerns, the poor, the equitable distribution of wealth, and many other things will be given their proper attention” (Foster). Moe-Lobeda supplements this idea by saying “the faultiness of our efforts to serve a God of love is no excuse to abandon them”

(187). Regardless of one's faith background, loving our neighbor will not always be easy.

Community development “involves choices, setting aside that which is not for life in us and our community while actively seeking and supporting all that is for life” (Myers 3). Choosing to see all people as valuable, regardless of proximity, helps put aside personal agendas for the well-being of humanity.

The Call for a Code of Ethics

Community development as “practice, as social movement, academic discipline, and legal service could be enhanced by articulating new guiding principles applicable to communities across the country” (Alexandre et. al 219). A Christian Community Development Code of Ethics will “provide baseline guidelines for what forms of economic incentives and related conduct constitute” community development practice (Alexandre et. al 220). This code would “cement the underlying guiding principles ... no matter the local community in which they are situated” providing an introduction for new practitioners, instructions for practice and ethics committee work, and preserving the overall values of community development as a field (Alexandre et. al 220; Mitzen). While a Christian Community Development Code of Ethics “is not a detailed set of recommended practices on a specific issue,” it will provide the broad ethical principles to which CCD practitioners should adhere with many specific recommended or required practices addressed by “national, regional, and sub sector-specific groups” (Independent Sector 7).

Particularly the Christian community development sphere “should adhere to the highest ethical standards because it is the right thing to do” and “because public trust in our performance is the bedrock of our legitimacy” (Independent Sector 2). Further, a commitment to ethical behavior will also “signal the sector's commitment to self-regulation” (Ito and Slatten 251). CCD practitioners are trusted to have the highest ethical behavior possible. This means embracing “the

spirit of the law, often going beyond legal requirements and making sure that what we do is matched by what the public understands about what we do” (Independent Sector 2). This is the primary area where ABC Community Services has dropped the bar well below the ethical standard – “transparency, openness and responsiveness to public concerns” are only a priority when funding or a church plant is at stake (Independent Sector 2). Ethical behavior requires transparency, openness and responsiveness to be a priority at all times, not just when it is suitable. A code of ethics would serve as a tool for reflexive evaluation and accountability within communities, organizations, and individuals.

A code of ethics serves to unite the members of a field “under a common mission and set of values” (Alexandre et. al 221). This is especially important as community development is an “interdisciplinary academic discipline with theories and concepts that are transferable as replicable models of local development across the country” (Alexandre et. al 221). Underneath the interdisciplinary diversity in the community development field, should be “a common set of ethical standards” (Independent Sector 2). This interdisciplinary characteristic will require a diversified approach in the creation of a code of ethics, allowing all voices to be heard. The development of a code to identify common themes and strategies is just as important as an actual code of ethics (Independent Sector 1; Ito and Slatten 265). An argument could certainly be made that anyone involved in community development is a community development practitioner; this mindset further lends itself to the importance of deep listening in practice and in the creation of a foundational set of values for the field. These discussions and times of compassionate, deep listening must take place in “local communities throughout the country, [and] they should do so in a way that is tethered to this broader concept of foundational principles to ensure that the discussions lead to the overarching goal of creating a Code of Ethics” (Alexandre et. al 221). A

code of ethics is the next step in field development “by providing important and needed frameworks and standards to both ensure accountability ... and guarantee qualitative assessment” of community development outcomes and practice (Alexandre et. al 221).

Smaller faith-based organizations need to acknowledge a basic framework with differing requirements for small and large organizations (Yasmin 119-120). The beauty of a code of ethics is that it can be contextualized to a given organization or community. One study conducted by Ito and Slatten produced the following additional recommendations for the field in increasing ethical conduct:

Raise awareness. Develop or support a collaborative Center for Nonprofit Ethics.

Convene funders for further dialogue. Develop a pipeline of staff champions to promote ethical practice in organizations across the sector. Produce a series of YouTube videos, online webinars or interactive eLearning modules. Develop ethics-related “trainings-in-a-box.” (263-264)

A multitude of resources will be most helpful in developing a higher adherence to ethical behavior. In developing resources for increasing ethical conduct, “sector leaders should also consider whether to be involved in developing competing resources, or rather, in promoting collaboration on the resources that already exist” (Ito and Slatten 264). In an interview with Scott Overpeck from the Christian Community Development Association (CCDA), he noted that while their philosophy is applicable and well-written, it leaves room for questions. Overpeck indicated that most of the questions received from CCDA members involved ethics with nonprofit organizations started and managed by churches. He felt that the next direction for the CCDA to go in publications has to do with ethical ambiguity. The CCDA has not yet published anything specific on this topic, further indicating the need for change.

A community approach will create the most accurate and applicable code that can cultivate change in the community development field. As community-based organizations, we are accountable to the consumers of service(s), funding sources, board of directors, and especially to the communities in which we reside (Mitzen). The creation of this tool is not designed to create arguments or additional division, but rather provide a resource for communities across the nation to come together and engage in copowerment. It is not enough for an outsider to enter into a community and direct or delegate to create change. In fact, most attempts of this nature have not led to lasting change and, in more extreme cases, hurt the community. The principle of copowerment guides behavior in a new direction. Copowerment is the dynamic of mutual exchange through which both sides of a social equation are made stronger and more effective by the other. Copowerment requires deep listening to achieve this mutual exchange in which all parties have wisdom and experience to contribute. Community development practitioners often bring resources and education to the social equation and how we bring these resources and knowledge matters. Sustainable and systemic change requires a relationship first – to love our neighbors as ourselves (Mark 12:31, NASB). In other words, to treat others how we want to be treated. The “most creative long-term solutions to the problems of the poor are coming from grassroots and church-based efforts” (CCDA). ABC Community Services modeled this in their YouTube video series for their feeding programs in which they created check-in videos for program participants in their primary language (Jenny). Copowerment is the key to sustainable community development which has become the “key element in development theorizing and policy-making” (Willis 179). While this thesis will establish a foundation for a Christian Community Development Code of Ethics, the need for

additional collaboration, specifically with input from the CCDA and other experienced individuals in the field, is acknowledged and recommended.

Biblical Community Development

Individuals, groups, places of worship, and nonprofits alike can engage in community development. For Christian community development practitioners, behavior is guided by Scripture as well as relevant theories and principles. A community is defined as “a group of individuals who share a mutual concern for one another’s welfare” (Vogl 9). From this definition it can be inferred we are all in one giant community made of sub-communities. Community works best when we take an approach of copowerment, acknowledging we all have strengths and experiences to bring to the table.

Community development exists as a field to strengthen communities from the inside out based on these strengths and experiences. Hebrews 10:24-25 displays this community together: “And let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near” (NASB). The Christian perspective emphasizes the importance of being an active participant in developing strong communities. As Aaron, Coach for ABC Community Services and Church notes, “we cannot leave out the spiritual side. And from our Christian base, we believe Christ is at the center of that. That’s where people change.” Christian community development stands upon Matthew 22:37-39: “And He said to him, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’” (NASB). Every person is valuable regardless of proximity, relationship, or any other demographic factor, including religion. People are hurting. Community development

practitioners are trying to find answers, but solutions fall short, or are led astray. As we move forward, “we don’t opt out of a necessary system, but we attempt to redeem it as we live by a more consistent ethic” (Clawson 26). Living in a more ethical way will change the broken systems in which we live.

Biblical Decision-Making Model on Ethics

Frederic Reamer’s ethical decision-making model has provided guidance for numerous practitioners in the helping fields since its creation in 2006. Reamer’s model is as follows:

1. Identify the problem, gathering as much information from as many perspectives as possible;
2. Identify the issues, core principles and competing issues;
3. Review the Code of Ethics;
4. Review applicable laws and regulations;
5. Consult with colleagues, supervisors, and legal experts (agency counsel, ethics committee, professional affiliations);
6. Consider possible courses of action;
7. Evaluate consequences of possible options;
8. Choose course of action, weighing probable impact of your decisions.

Reamer’s model is very thorough and useful but does not include Christian principles relevant to the Christian community development practitioner.

Ethical dilemmas occur when a practitioner, attempting to make the right decision, must choose between at least two right courses of action, leading to at least one ethical principle not being thoroughly fulfilled. Examples could include confidentiality versus protecting others from harm, self-determination versus risk for self-harm, obtaining funds for services versus

embellishing reports, obeying the law versus breaking the law to meet or protect clients' needs, and protecting coworker privacy versus reporting unethical conduct. For Christian community development practitioners, ethical dilemmas have another dimension of ambiguity due to faith obligation. Examples of ethical dilemmas in a faith-based context include access to services versus a holistic approach to services, or transparency in services versus proselytizing.

ABC's Primary Ethical Dilemma

For ABC Community Services, their primary ethical dilemma is their personal commitment as a Christian organization versus integrity in services. The ABC church planting branch largely influences the available services of the nonprofit. ABC Community Services is receiving federal funding as a secular nonprofit from the USDA, but their services provided are influenced primarily by their ability to plant a church in a given location. Schools are chosen based on eligibility for the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) grant as well as if there is a church in that town connected to the Assemblies of God denomination in the Christian faith. Many ABC staff members and outside community members see this as a large ethical problem. The cognitive dissonance between their commitment to fulfill the Great Commission and to provide quality services by receiving enough funding has created an ethical and physical discomfort for these staff and community members. Nonprofit accounting requires a profit balance and for line items to account for each dollar spent. Standard administrative fees range from 10-15%, while ABC's unclear budget has vague administrative fees at approximately 40% (Billy). The questions remain: (1) Is ABC accepting USDA grant money to cover costs that were already covered by donations? (2) Where is this non-line itemed money going? and (3) When will a full financial report be made public? Ethical judgment involves the application of scripture to a situation by a person seeking justice-creating love (Birmingham Theological Seminary).

Unfortunately, I cannot say in clear conscience that ABC is using ethical judgment in the execution of their programs.

The following model and preliminary ethical code are presented to help guide CCD practitioners when facing ethical dilemmas and challenges. This model and code rely on a Christian perspective of ethical behavior. I have shared context of the case study collected from fieldwork to allow readers to determine its applicability to their own settings.

The Model

1. Pray for God's guidance [*See: Matthew 6:9-15*].
 - a. *Matthew 6:32-33: For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.*
2. Define the competing issue(s) or ethical principles to be examined.
 - a. Recognize your own viewpoints and biases in the situation.
3. Gather all scripture on the issue.
 - a. Research specific commandments, principles, and examples in the biblical text.
4. Study the scriptural instruction.
 - a. Pay attention to genre, literary style and organization, definitions and grammar, context, and overall theme, purpose, and historical significance.
5. Apply the biblical instruction to today's context.
 - a. Seek wise counsel from the Christian Community Development Association (CCDA) and/or third-party experts in the field(s). Inner-organizational counsel may or may not be appropriate in an ethical dilemma.

- b. Supplement with other relevant biblically based sources including, but not limited to publications by the CCDA, journal articles, or websites.
- 6. Arrive at a biblically-driven ethical decision.
 - a. Ephesians 5:1-2: *Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.*
- 7. Apologize and respond with humility if we miss it and repeat this process.

When We Miss It

Step seven in the biblical decision-making model is essential because CCD practitioners will sometimes fall short of the standard to which we hope to adhere. Matthew 7:24-27 cautions Christian community development practitioners that those who have their foundation on Christ and act on His biblical instruction will not fall, but Christians who hear and do not obey will fall. In other words, Christians who have learned God's guidance on ethics and choose to ignore it are in for a rude awakening - especially when doing work in God's name. For the Christian, "how we respond in these hard cases has more to do with the moral virtue or character that we have developed, by God's grace and through God's Spirit, than it does with the specific facts and theories that we have learned" (Sherwood 336). Today's reality is most organizations and people truly mean well; they really want to make a difference in communities around the globe. CCD practitioners may miss the mark when becoming too emotional, prideful, or rational and attempting to take control. When this happens, an example of reconciliation within individuals and communities can be seen through God's story (Katongole and Rice 38). Reconciliation is necessary because "we know from experience that our world is broken and needs to be fixed" (Katongole and Rice 23). It may be intimidating to decide where to begin creating ethical

changes in organization(s), but if we want to create change, we must start with *something* (Kelley and Kelley 123).

Christian Community Development Code of Ethics

The attached Christian Community Development Code of Ethics Primer provides the foundational components for the development of a full code in the future. More specific standards *must* be added to the Code in addition to what currently exists to make it effective and useful; currently published and utilized codes such as the NASW Code of Ethics provide examples of these detailed standards. In addition to currently existing codes, two perspectives have been the most helpful in the evolution of the primer on ethics. First, the Christian Community Development Association (CCDA) presents eight principles for community development:

1. Redistribution: “A just distribution of resources” (“Redistribution”).
2. Relocation: Known as incarnational ministry to most clearly understand the real problems facing the poor (“Relocation”).
3. Reconciliation: Involves reconciling people to God and people to people (“Reconciliation”).
4. Leadership Development: “Restore the stabilizing glue and fill the vacuum of moral, spiritual, and economic leadership that is so prevalent in poor communities by development leaders” (“Leadership Development”).
5. Empowerment: Involves opportunity, willingness, and dignity (“Empowerment”).
6. Wholistic Approach: Development that seeks to address every area of a person’s life (“Wholistic Approach”).

7. Church-Based: “Churches should be seen as lovers of their community and neighborhoods” (“Church-Based”).
8. Listening to the Community: “The felt need concept helps us as community developers to focus on the desires of the community residents” (“Listening to the Community”).

The second perspective is from Dieumeme Noelliste, a professor of ethics at Denver Seminary, who presents six characteristics of Christian ethics:

1. Communal: Ethics “exist for the people of God;”
2. Grace-Motivated: God’s grace motivates us toward ethical living;
3. Transformational: Our hearts are transformed, rather than just our behavior being transformed;
4. Countercultural: Involves an assessment and, if necessary, replacement of values;
5. Integrative: Biblical ethics reaches “into every corner of human living;”
6. Eschatological: Biblical ethics are motivated by “what God has done in Christ and what He promises to do in the future.”.

The two above perspectives provide the foundation for ethical behavior in Christian community development. When combined with a holistic, asset-based approach, the Christian Community Development Code of Ethics is brought to life.

CCD Ethical Principles

Each of the following principles in the code are applicable under the umbrella of Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD). The ABCD approach “shifts the focus of community development from ‘problem solving’ to ‘asset building’” (Wilke 1). This is similar to the Strengths Perspective in the social work and counseling fields (Langer and Lietz 56). Every community has something to offer. Community development works best at the grassroots level

with a strengths-focus. ABCD “uncovers what each neighborhood has to offer” instead of what it lacks (Wilke 8). Christian community development practitioners have an ethical responsibility to seek out the strengths within a community and ensure the individual and collective well-being of those who live there. The Code itself is strengths-based, or asset-based, rather than taking a problem-centered approach. Roles for community development practitioners include but are not limited to educator, broker, case manager, mobilizer, mediator, advocate, facilitator, coordinator, spokesperson, and consultant (Suppes and Wells 17-18). Community development practitioners have a responsibility to fulfill these roles to the highest ethical standard. The Code serves as a framework to assist community development practitioners in their ethical behavior.

The Code addresses nine (9) Principles of Christian Community Development:

- (1) Contextualization: The practice of designing programs and processes with attention to the particular cultural characteristics and inherent resources of a given people, place, and time.
- (2) Reconciliation: “An ongoing spiritual process involving forgiveness, repentance and justice that restores broken relationships and systems to reflect God’s original intention for all creation to flourish” (Salter McNeil 26).
- (3) Leadership Development: An ongoing process of mobilizing leaders in a collaborative way to be competent in and accept mutual ownership of our communities (Kuenkel 15).
- (4) Copowerment: Dynamic of mutual exchange through which both sides of a social equation are made stronger and more effective by the other.
- (5) Holistic Approach: The organic or functional intersectionality of life (Suppes and Wells 560).

- (6) Church-Based: The bearer of the biblical story through which community and transformational change can occur (Myers 23).
- (7) Listening to the Community: Participation in active listening to promote community involvement (Kuenkel 33; Wilke 8).
- (8) Transparency: To engage in a trustworthy manner by being unreserved about one's role(s), function(s), and goal(s) (Gilstrap and Minchow-Proffitt 178).
- (9) Collaboration: Frank acknowledgement of organizational limitations, the affirmation of another group's capacities, and the joining of abilities and resources in pursuit of mutually established goals.

These principles allow for reflection on daily work and long-term goals for CCD practitioners.

They allow the practitioners to ask: is this action truly something that fits into ethical community development or has an ulterior motive snuck in? When these principles are in conflict, an ethical dilemma may be present.

CCD Ethical Standards

Similar to the field of social work, community development seeks “to enhance human well-being and help meet the basic human needs of all people, with particular attention to the needs and empowerment of people who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty” (NASW 1). A primary component of community development is a holistic, multidimensional approach; the approach that provides the source for the Ethical Standards within the CCD Code of Ethics. According to Margaret Swarbrick, this multidimensional approach includes the domains of physical, emotional, intellectual, social, environmental, and spiritual (311). In addition to the above domains, economic and occupational domains are also pertinent, totaling eight (8) domains.

The Ethical Standards for the CCD Practitioner include eight (8) holistic areas of well-being in which we can show love to our neighbor:

1. CCD Practitioners have an ethical responsibility to seek the physical well-being of a community, relating to the body.
2. CCD Practitioners have an ethical responsibility to seek the emotional well-being of a community, relating to emotions such as joy, sorrow, fear, love, etc.
3. CCD Practitioners have an ethical responsibility to seek the intellectual well-being of a community, relating to the capacity of the mind.
4. CCD Practitioners have an ethical responsibility to seek the social well-being of a community, relating to companionship or relationship.
5. CCD Practitioners have an ethical responsibility to seek the environmental well-being of a community, relating to surrounding things, conditions, or influences.
6. CCD Practitioners have an ethical responsibility to seek the spiritual well-being of a community, relating to the spirit or soul.
7. CCD Practitioners have an ethical responsibility to seek the economic well-being of a community, relating to the welfare of material resources and systems.
8. CCD Practitioners have an ethical responsibility to seek the occupational well-being of a community, relating to ways of earning a living.

While it could be argued that there are additional areas that could be addressed within the Code, I have found that those areas can be categorized within the eight (8) areas listed above. The Code itself provides scriptural references for the CCD practitioner to utilize in their decision-making as the biblical decision-making model suggests.

Application to ABC Church Planting and Community Services

ABC Community Services (ABC) is a nonprofit organization that was started by a local church. The church has a strong emphasis on church planting, and they started a nonprofit organization so that their church programs could be categorized differently for tax purposes. Today, the nonprofit primarily focuses on a feeding program through the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) grant. ABC chooses partnerships with school districts that meet the USDA grant eligibility requirements based on the possibility of a church plant in that community. The Site Directors at each school also play the role of the Campus Pastor at that church plant location; these pastors are paid from the federal USDA feeding program grant. Instead of planting churches that are equipped for localized Christian community development, ABC Church is using their nonprofit community development organization as a guise to reach their church planting goals.

One employee, Hank, shared in an interview that ABC is unable to be the Community Development Corporation (CDC) they say they are because they are simply providing food and church services, not full community development as their website states. Hank feels uncomfortable with the discrepancy between what they say they are doing and how ABC is making the system work for them. He explained they are presenting “future stuff to everybody so we get more buy-in from organizations. The integrity is being compromised there in my mind, because we don’t have the services to back up what we’re talking about” (Hank).

Another employee, Jenny, shared her concerns regarding the unconscious assumptions within the ABC culture. She noted that when talking about the nonprofit feeding sites and other programs, church lingo starts to creep in quickly “and there goes all our money from the state” (Jenny). Petra Kuenkel would call this the iceberg model; “with an iceberg, what we see – the

upper part – is determined by what we do not see – the part under the water. Yet, both parts are the iceberg” (39). A separation at all levels between the church and nonprofit side of the organization is necessary. Another employee echoed this sentiment when she was told the branches were separate, but “there was some crossover and some kind of tug and pull ... I think the biggest cultural differences were the closed-door policies that are so so strong and that is not anything I’ve ever experienced in any nonprofit” (Hailey). “I’ve never been ushered out of my office, out of the whole building because I might hear something from the board,” Hailey shared. Billy noted the organizational culture of secrecy in his interview as well – “we need strong spiritual leaders and transparency.” In my fieldwork at ABC, I also experienced the closed-door policies stronger than I have previously seen in a nonprofit before. I was not allowed to be a part of the Executive Leadership Team meetings or a handful of other meetings. While I respect the need for confidentiality in certain circumstances, if day-to-day topics must be kept secret, then should these topics truly be discussed, let alone taking place? The lack of transparency shown at ABC certainly calls their integrity into question, even though their intentions appear good at face-value.

Pastor Samuel, the founding pastor of ABC Church and ABC, noted the rapid growth has many within the two branches feeling anxious. According to Samuel, ABC is the action-arm of the church. Samuel stated, “I’m self-aware enough to know that we’re quite dysfunctional. And I say that about myself and, you know, I think I’m a pretty great guy.” When asked how he knows if ABC Community Services is operating with excellence, he answered:

You come in and change the community and people that are impoverished ... So, if we have community development partnerships, we actually change and see people transformed. And we plant and we reach our goals ... we just planted 10 [churches] and,

you know, there's only a few top church planting organizations that do that level. So, if we go to 20 or 100 or 200 or 360, then that will have been with excellence (Samuel).

The overlap between ABC Church Planting and ABC Community Services is clear, stemming from the leadership down. If ABC is the action-arm of the church, then the church and the nonprofit are not separate and balanced but enmeshed and potentially harmful to communities.

The Model Applied to ABC

While ABC Community Services is intending to strengthen communities, they have missed the mark on ethical decision-making by using the nonprofit community development organization as a guise to reach their church planting goals. They are attempting to promote church-based community development, but they have sacrificed transparency and copowerment with communities in the process of developing their brand. This lack of transparency and copowerment hinders the well-being of communities and human souls. ABC can benefit from using the biblical decision-making model in their initial reflection in light of issues that have been brought up by staff and community members. After the initial reflection, ABC can use the Biblical Decision-Making Model and Christian Community Development Code of Ethics as they proceed with small and large decisions. The following is an example of how ABC could use the decision-making model in initial reflection:

1. Pray for God's guidance: ABC staff members would sit down as individuals, as a board, and as an organization to pray for God's guidance in their next step(s). All other major decisions would be delayed, if possible.
2. Define the competing issue(s) or ethical principles to be examined: Some ethical dilemmas ABC is experiencing include:

- a. *Church-Based Development versus Listening to the Community:* ABC is currently putting their goal of planting 360+ churches ahead of listening to the community. While a community may *need* after-school feeding programs according to ABC's perspective, has the community been given a chance to openly and safely voice their opinions regarding a feeding-program or church plant? If a community wants a feeding program but does not want a church plant, how will ABC proceed?
- b. *Transparency versus Leadership Development:* ABC's current misuse of federal USDA grant money to pay for staff's time in pastoral roles and work in the food program is producing more leaders at more church plant sites but is compromising transparency and the integrity of their work. Can ABC be transparent about their use of funds while focusing on developing the leaders they already have? ABC must ask themselves, "how would we feel if people used the money we gave them in ways other than those for which we gave it" (Nouwen 28)?
- c. *Transparency versus Copowerment:* ABC staff members have a blurred view on whether they are working alongside community members or improving a community just by their presence. ABC leadership is allowing their own personal ambition of church planting to neglect copowerment with not only their communities but their own employees as well. Additionally, as Hank mentioned in his interview, ABC is currently presenting themselves as something they are not, thus misleading the government, community members, volunteers, and employees alike.

3. Gather all scripture on the issue:

- a. Pay attention to commandments, principles, and examples (*see below*).

4. Study the scriptural instruction:

- a. *And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. Romans 12:2*
- b. *So now wrap your heart tightly around the hope that lives within us, knowing that God always keeps His promises! Discover creative ways to encourage others and to motivate them toward acts of compassion, doing beautiful works as expressions of love. This is not the time to pull away and neglect meeting together, as some have formed the habit of doing. In fact, we should come together even more frequently, eager to encourage and urge each other onward as we anticipate that day dawning. Hebrews 10:23-25 TPT*
- c. *Live in the truth and keep your promises, and the Lord will keep delighting in you, but He detests a liar. Proverbs 12:22 TPT*
- d. *Before you do anything, put your trust totally in God and not in yourself. Then every plan you make will succeed. Proverbs 16:3 TPT*
- e. *But above all, my fellow believers, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath; but let your yes be [a truthful] yes, and your no be [a truthful] no, so that you may not fall under judgment. James 5:12 AMP*
- f. *A false balance is an abomination to the Lord, But a just weight is His delight. When pride comes, then comes dishonor, But with the humble is wisdom. The*

integrity of the upright will guide them, But the crookedness of the treacherous will destroy them. Proverbs 11:1-3

5. Apply the biblical instruction to today's context:

- a. ABC leadership and staff would seek wise counsel from spiritual mentors and community development practitioners, preferably outside the organization, who understand the context to offer objective feedback and counsel. This could include the Christian Community Development Association (CCDA).
- b. ABC leadership and staff would review relevant community development publications and other biblically based sources.

6. Arrive at a biblically-driven ethical decision:

- a. Ephesians 5:1-2: *Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.*
- b. ABC has multiple courses of actions they could take; some they may take simultaneously. These courses of actions could include, but are not limited to:
 - i. Separate leadership between the church and nonprofit which clarifies responsibilities and reduces economic, social, spiritual, and occupational conflicts of interest. It is probable that ABC's goal of planting 360+ churches in one state and supplementing their church-planting with feeding programs may not be compatible. Should separate leadership be instituted, the two organizations may live in harmony, engaging in copowerment with the other as they work to create holistic, systemic change.

- ii. Rebrand all publications to be more transparent. Should ABC choose to focus on humanitarian aid and/or development, they need to be clear on their role(s), function(s), and goal(s) of all programming and decisions.
 - iii. Adjust the members of the Board of Directors to be more objective. Representative membership of community members who are not connected to ABC church-planting or ABC church, but hold faith-based values, could include local lawyers, teachers/professors, grant-writers, community development practitioners, government representatives, nutrition experts, early childhood experts, and pastors. Objective oversight is an essential component of a Board of Directors.
 - iv. Implement the CCD Code of Ethics and Decision-Making Model in daily work.
 - v. Create a strategic plan to adjust programming to adhere to ethical principles.
 - vi. Develop a pipeline of staff champions to promote ethical practice within the organization; simultaneously establish an ethics committee (Ito and Slatten 263-264).
 - vii. Bring in an outside consultant to create and/or facilitate “trainings-in-a-box” and interactive YouTube videos, seminars and/or online webinars, or interactive eLearning modules (Ito and Slatten 263-264).
7. Should ABC miss the mark again, they can engage in this ongoing process of ethical reconciliation and decision-making. ABC leadership would apologize and respond with humility to any relevant parties, specifically identifying the ways in which they are

seeking change and input from wise counsel and the communities in which they are involved.

Moving Forward

This thesis has laid out an argument for why organizations should use an ethical decision-making model and code of ethics, but the questions of why an organization would want or be required to use these tools still remains. The next steps for this ethical decision-making model and code of ethics to be widely and proactively implemented include:

- (1) The Christian Community Development Association (CCDA) would approve a finalized version of the ethical decision-making model and code of ethics with even more specific standards created to assist individuals and organizations in ethical decision making.
- (2) The CCDA would begin to require all individuals and organizations to provide proof of implementation of the model and code for membership.
- (3) The CCDA would publish the ethical decision-making model and code of ethics on their website and social media as well as periodic trainings and workshops on ethics.
- (4) Nonprofit business and community development programs at an undergraduate and graduate level would implement the decision-making model and code of ethics into curriculum and practice settings.
- (5) Grant organizations and other funding sources would require proof of implementation of an ethical decision-making model and code of ethics for daily work in community development organizations for grant eligibility.
- (6) The ethical decision-making model and code of ethics would be reviewed, and revised if necessary, every three years to ensure clarity and relevance.

Adhering to the finalized and revised versions of the ethical decision-making model and code of ethics is beneficial for individuals and organizations as their reputation for being an ethical organization would increase, therefore increasing community support and funding. Further, an organization will be more sustainable when adhering to an ethical decision-making model and code of ethics as they will be more equipped to tackle challenges that will inevitably arise in the community development field, thus extending their community impact rather than terminating programs due to scandals or ineffectiveness.

The Last Step

In truth, all of the above recommendations may be necessary for ABC Community Services. ABC may choose to continue on as-is, neglecting the issues that have been raised. They may also choose to immediately implement changes and put all other decisions on hold. There may be instances in which an organization is not acting unethically, but a CCD practitioner still does not agree with their choices in theory or practice. The CCD practitioner can return to prayer and resume the ethical decision-making model to find guidance on proceeding.

The last step in the decision-making model may be one of the most important. Richard Beck cautions that often the “‘feeling of rightness’ trumps sober reflection and moral discernment. Further, we are often unwilling to listen to others until we are, to some degree, psychologically open to persuasion” (5). Beck mentions that we are often like the Parable of the Sower found in the Bible in Mark 4 in which some seeds planted withered away in dead soil and others invested their roots in fruitful soil and produced thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold (NASB). Many seeds have been planted throughout this thesis document; ABC must choose which type of soil they will be.

It is true that “no one likes to admit they are wrong, particularly if one’s career or intellectual legacy is at stake” (Beck 5). With so many organizations today, it is easy to treat the organization as a separate being entirely - the organization “enjoys the legal status of a person, it is free of the social and legal forces that ensure good behavior from real people, such as empathy, public disapproval, and the threat of imprisonment” (Bornstein and Davis 4). As Sue Hammond points out, “one of the reasons organizational change is hard is that it produces an uneasy feeling” (13). Organizations are made of hurting and broken people. CCD practitioners must return to a place of empathy and recognize what public disapproval and the threat of imprisonment may mean for those in an organization. The scandals and hurt that organizations have caused throughout time for the sake of their vision is deeply saddening. Those involved in reconciliation efforts recognize the importance of individual and corporate repentance - “it’s very important for one to take responsibility for the sin of people and then become someone who builds the bridges between that offender group and the victim group” (Nyamutera 30:22-30:55). Should ABC Community Services recognize the serious issues in their organization and genuinely take action to change, they must ask themselves: To what end are we willing to go to reach our church planting potential? Who will be hurt in the process?

Conclusion

Community development as “practice, as social movement, academic discipline, and legal service could be enhanced by articulating new guiding principles applicable to communities across the country” (Alexandre et. al 219). Ethical ambiguity leading to ethical scandals continues to be a large concern in the community development field. Reflecting on the characteristics of Christian ethics, the outcomes of a code of ethics, and implementing a biblical decision-making model and code will enhance existing codes of conduct and policy that

currently leave the field underserved. ABC Community Services must consider adhering to Christian ethics in their programming and day-to-day activities.

The attached Biblical Decision-Making Model and Code of Ethics has implications for Christians and non-Christians alike. As mentioned above, some content may need to be adjusted to be more relevant to a given context. It is the work of all community members, regardless of faith tradition, who are working to strengthen, support, and love communities. When working together we realize we do not need to carry the weight of the world on our shoulders but are more effective when we share the load. Our foundational motivations may differ, but we are all in this together. When we work together to make ethical choices, we will all thrive.

Appendix A: The Biblical Decision-Making Model and CCD Code of Ethics

CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

A Primer for an Ethical Decision-Making
Model and CCD Code of Ethics

JAYME MONNIER | NORTHWEST UNIVERSITY



Ver. 1 | Created 2020-2021

All scripture included in this document is from the New American Standard Bible (NASB) unless otherwise noted.

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Introduction

It is often assumed simply because an organization is faith-based, they are acting ethically. When it emerges they are not acting ethically, we are appalled to think someone could behave in that manner under God's name. Occasionally these organizations are unethical and divisive from the beginning; most times these organizations are innocently ignorant to the damage that has been caused at their hands.

While faith-based communities were once prominent in responding to crises and systemic issues, many churches have firmly withdrawn from addressing these complicated issues. Para-church organizations have been created to fill the gap churches have left.¹ Many of these faith-based organizations are faced with daily ethical dilemmas without a concise resource to assist in making decisions that impact the organization and their community. Scripture is considered as a resource for guiding our behavior, but there are few resources that lay out the scriptural foundation for biblical ethics. This primer will lay the foundation for biblical ethics using various sources with specific emphasis on scripture, establish a biblical decision-making model, and inaugurate the creation of a biblical code of ethics for Christian community development practitioners.

Part I: Biblical Community Development

Community development exists as a field to strengthen communities from the inside out. Hebrews 10:24-25 affirms God created us to be in community together:

And let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

We are made for being an active participant in developing strong, faith-based communities.

Christian community development stands upon Matthew 22:37-39:

And He said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'

The Church has taught for centuries what it means to love the Lord our God. But what does it really mean to love our neighbor? It is clear our systems are broken. Our people are hurting. We are trying to find answers, but our solutions fall short.

The solution is two-fold, based on Matthew 27:37-39.

Part I: Biblical Community Development

First is an internal transformation. Salvation is not earned by works, but rather by the confession of our mouth that Jesus is Lord over our lives and belief in our heart that God raised Him from the dead and He now sits at the right hand of God. Scripture tells us belief in our hearts results in righteousness and confession with the mouth results in salvation (Romans 10:9-10). Salvation leads us to the greatest and first commandment: Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind (Matthew 22:37-38). Then comes discipleship, prayer, learning of scripture, seeking justice-creating love, and being part of a Church community. We can be assured we are not alone in our efforts to seek justice-creating love because we cannot achieve this genuine, justice-creating love without God (1 John 4:7-11). This first step of internal transformation is the most crucial because without it, our efforts will be in vain.

Part I: Biblical Community Development

Second, which is the focus of this document, is an external transformation. The first internal transformation leads us to this external course of action. When Jesus came to this earth as fully man and fully God, many thought he would bring a revolution of systemic upheaval, and he did. However, this upheaval looked like radical neighbor-love, rather than a radical political or social approach. His revolution was one of justice guided by principles of compassion and love.² Throughout the Gospel story he demonstrated this revolution of justice by loving his neighbor: feeding the hungry, healing the sick, encouraging the broken, and making disciples.

One might ask: Does this type of justice-creating love require an abundance of time and effort? The answer is yes. No place in scripture does it inform us this path toward justice-creating love will be easy, carefree, or quick. However, it does inform us it will be worth it:

Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me something to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.'

Part I: Biblical Community Development

Then the righteous will answer Him, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You something to drink? And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You? When did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?'

The King will answer and say to them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent of that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.' These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life. (Matthew 25:34-40, 46)

Further confirmation of external transformation as the second step in the solution to healing our communities is found again in 1 John 4:15-21: *Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. By this, love is perfected with us, so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment; because as He is, so also are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love. We love, because He first loved us.*

Part I: Biblical Community Development

If someone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also.

Love of our neighbor is at the heart of community development. Community development is at the heart of God. When we are transformed by God, this love is possible. Justice-creating love is the second essential component of healing our communities.

We know God as the integral component of this two-fold process of transformational community development because Isaiah 55:6-11 lays out this same process for us:

Seek the Lord while He may be found; Call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way And the unrighteous man his thoughts; And let him return to the Lord, And He will have compassion on him, And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon.

"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways," declares the Lord. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways And My thoughts higher than your thoughts.

Part I: Biblical Community Development

"For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, And do not return there without watering the earth And making it bear and sprout, And furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater; So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; It will not return to Me empty, Without accomplishing what I desire, And without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it."

Our neighbor includes those in our immediate proximity, but also those whom we have yet to meet. Our lives are intertwined with each other's lives. God's supernatural guidance provides direction to us to be effective in strengthening and healing our communities.

In summary:

When we have experienced first the internal transformation of salvation and repentance, we then can take external action with God-given radical love that transforms our communities. Since we now have this justice-creating love springing forth from within us, we must take an effective and ethical approach to truly imitate the same love Christ shows in scripture. This takes us to Part II: An Ethical Foundation.

Part II: An Ethical Foundation

First and foremost, a Code of Ethics differs from a Code of Conduct in that **a Code of Ethics provides guidance when faced with ethical dilemmas**. An ethical dilemma is when attempting to make the right decision, a practitioner must choose between at least two right courses of action, leading to at least one ethical principle not being thoroughly fulfilled. An example includes transparency in services versus proselytizing.

True neighbor-love as demonstrated by Jesus is justice-creating. Justice implies that someone is receiving what they deserve. At Jesus' sacrifice on the cross, he took the punishment that we deserved for our own sin. He was merciful to us and showed us love and compassion. **Mercy is an essential component of justice-creating love.** That while we do not deserve compassion, Jesus' sacrifice for us warrants justice-creating love toward ourselves and each individual around the globe. **No one is exempt from this love for any reason.** This justice is at the heart of God (Amos 5:4-24). To act justly is to show God's love to all. The first step of internal transformation through repentance and salvation described above leads us to action. Jesus' radical and sacrificial love provides the model for action to bring healing through the love of our neighbor.

Part II: An Ethical Foundation

So, who is our neighbor? We have five possible relationships: with ourselves, with community, with the “other,” with our environment, and with God.³ Loving our neighbor, as shown by Jesus, involves whomever one’s life in some way impacts or whose life impacts one’s own.⁴ We are called to love not only those in our immediate proximity, but also those whom we have yet to meet.

The neglect of step one, an internal transformation, in Christian community development directly contributes to scandals, burnout, spiritual abuse, and other external issues that come to fruition in step two, an external transformation - not loving our neighbor.

Pride: A Cautionary Tale

It is easy to think we are immune from the temptations of this world. Our education and/or experience provide us with the perfect foundation for taking leadership and authority in community development. However, if our education or experience were enough on its own, all the world’s problems would have been solved long ago. We must put God’s leadership first. Regardless of your faith tradition in relation to the role of the Holy Spirit, God provides direct leadership to our daily activities and decisions through the third person of the trinity if we stop and listen. Sometimes this means not rushing decisions even in the face of the high-pressure and fast-paced society that we live in.

Part II: An Ethical Foundation

The irony is not lost that this primer on Christian ethics is another tool that can serve in the place of God's leading if we let it. That is never the intention of this document. In the face of an ethical dilemma, this document is a mere resource that may be used as a guide as CCD practitioners seek God's direction through prayer and scripture.

None of us are immune from the temptations of this world. However, when we humble ourselves before the Lord, we will be lifted up (James 4:10). Matthew 15:18-20 reminds us:

But the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile the man. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders. These are the things which defile the man; but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile the man.

This is why we are reminded to guard our hearts and lean not on our own understanding (Proverbs 24:3; Proverbs 3:5-6). God is not in need of our education or experience to heal communities. His ultimate plan of justice will bring forth complete healing in heaven. However, he wants to use us in this healing process while on earth. We must check our pride at the door in order to be used. Sometimes this is an hourly occurrence, or even more frequent.

Part II: An Ethical Foundation

God tells us in Psalms 51:16-17:

For You do not delight in sacrifice, otherwise I would give it; You are not pleased with burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; A broken and contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.

To be humble and repentant before the Lord leaves room for God to use us in His healing work.

Part III: A Biblical Decision-Making Model on Ethics

How do we know what to do to participate in this healing work? Scripture and established models lead the way for us in ethical decision making.⁵ Let's bring it all together:

2 Peter 1:3 affirms God has given us what we need to make ethical decisions throughout time:
Seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.

Christian ethics must rely on God's perspective of ethical behavior rather than our own. God's very character provides our standard for ethical behavior, or right over wrong.⁶ We know from Isaiah 55:9 God's understanding is higher than our own. 1 John 1:5-7 identifies God as the Light in whom there is no darkness (i.e. evil, wrong behavior, etc.). If justice-creating love is from God, then we must start with Him as the model for goodness and right action.

Scripture is the God-breathed revelation of His commands, principles, and virtues. In following this exemplary narrative, we see God's favor poured out on those who adhere to this essential aspect of Christian theology. Our theology is a reflection on God and His Word that leads to application.⁷

Part III: A Biblical Decision-Making Model on Ethics

2 Timothy 3:16-17 confirms:

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

Regardless of our faith tradition or culture, it is clear that some actions and thought processes are considered right and others wrong. It is both our mindset and the course of action we take within our mindset that are ethically bound in accountability to God and our communities. The orientation of our very nature, our soul, matters. See Romans 8:5-11 for guidance:

For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.

Part III: A Biblical Decision-Making Model on Ethics

If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

What is ethically good according to scripture?

Every person is able to do good things that may be pleasing in God's sight. However, the motive and mindset behind these actions is the key difference for Christian ethical behavior. Love is the essential component to the two-fold solution explained above: to first love God and then love others. Our ultimate motivation should be God's glory as seen in 1 Corinthians 10:31:

Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

This is also seen in 1 Peter 4:11:

Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Part III: A Biblical Decision-Making Model on Ethics

Right actions rooted in justice-creating love originate in a desire for God's glory, not our own.

Ethical judgment involves the application of scripture to a situation by a person seeking justice-creating love.⁸

A Biblical Decision-Making Model on Ethics⁹

1. Pray for God's guidance [*See: Matthew 6:9-15*].
 - a. *Matthew 6:32-33: For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.*
2. Define the competing issue(s) or ethical principles to be examined.
 - a. Recognize your own viewpoints and biases in the situation.
3. Gather all scripture on the issue.
 - a. Research specific commandments, principles, and examples in the biblical text.
4. Study the scriptural instruction.
 - a. Pay attention to genre, literary style and organization, definitions and grammar, context, and overall theme, purpose, and historical significance.

Part III: A Biblical Decision-Making Model on Ethics

6. Apply the biblical instruction to today's context.
 - a. Seek wise counsel from the Christian Community Development Association (CCDA) and/or third-party experts in the field(s). Inner-organizational counsel may or may not be appropriate in an ethical dilemma.
 - b. Supplement with other relevant biblically based sources including, but not limited to publications by the CCDA, journal articles, or websites.
7. Arrive at a biblically-driven ethical decision. *[See: A Case Study: The Model in Application for an example - p. 30]*
 - a. *Ephesians 5:1-2: Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.*
8. Apologize and respond with humility if we miss it and repeat this process. *[See: When We Miss It: Disobedience and Repentance for further explanation - p. 28]*

Part IV: Christian Community Development Code of Ethics

As we have learned, all scripture is profitable for teaching and correction (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Therefore, in the creation and implementation of a CCD Code of Ethics, we must first start with scripture. Let's start at the beginning in Matthew 22:37-39:

And He said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'"

We have talked above about loving God, but as we have said the focus of this code is loving our neighbor.

Each of the following principles in the code are applicable under the umbrella of Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD). The ABCD approach "shifts the focus of community development from 'problem solving' to 'asset building'".¹⁰ This is similar to the Strengths Perspective in the social work and counseling fields.¹¹ Every community has something to offer. Community development works best at the grassroots level with a strengths-focus. ABCD "uncovers what each neighborhood has to offer" instead of what it lacks.¹²

Part IV: Christian Community Development Code of Ethics

Christian community development practitioners have an ethical responsibility to seek out the strengths within a community and ensure the individual and collective well-being of those who live there. The Code itself is strengths-based, or asset-based, rather than taking a problem-centered approach. Roles for community development practitioners include but are not limited to educator, broker, case manager, mobilizer, mediator, advocate, facilitator, coordinator, spokesperson, and consultant.¹³ Community development practitioners have a responsibility to fulfill these roles to the highest ethical standard. The Code serves as a framework to assist Christian community development practitioners, fulfilling any role, in their ethical behavior and decision-making.

Part IV: Christian Community Development Code of Ethics

The CCD Code of Ethics¹⁴

Principles of Christian Community Development¹⁵

- (1) Contextualization: The practice of designing programs and processes with attention to the particular cultural characteristics and inherent resources of a given people, place, and time.
- (2) Reconciliation: An ongoing spiritual process involving forgiveness, repentance and justice that restores broken relationships and systems to reflect God's original intention for all creation to flourish.¹⁶
- (3) Leadership Development: An ongoing process of mobilizing leaders in a collaborative way to be competent in and accept mutual-ownership of our communities.¹⁷
- (4) Copowerment: Dynamic of mutual exchange through which both sides of a social equation are made stronger and more effective by the other.
- (5) Holistic Approach: The organic or functional intersectionality of life.¹⁸
- (6) Church-Based: The bearer of the biblical story through which community and transformational change can occur.¹⁹
- (7) Listening to the Community: Participation in active listening to promote community involvement.²⁰
- (8) Transparency: To engage in a trustworthy manner by being unreserved about one's role(s), function(s), and goal(s).²¹
- (9) Collaboration: Frank acknowledgement of organizational limitations, the affirmation of another group's capacities, and the joining of abilities and resources in pursuit of mutually established goals.

Part IV: Christian Community Development Code of Ethics

The CCD Code of Ethics

Ethical Standards for the CCD Practitioner:

Community development takes a multidimensional approach to seeking individual and collective well-being. There are eight (8) areas of well-being in which we can love our neighbor: (1) Physical, (2) Emotional, (3) Intellectual, (4) Social, (5) Environmental, (6) Spiritual, (7) Economic, and (8) Occupational.

(1) CCD Practitioners have an ethical responsibility to seek the physical well-being of a community, relating to the body.

(See also: Romans 12:1, 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, 1 Corinthians 10:31, 3 John 1:2)

Many hardships and perplexing circumstances confront the righteous, but the Lord rescues him from them all. He keeps all his bones; not one of them is broken. Psalms 34:19-20 AMP

Bless the Lord, O my soul, And forget none of His benefits; Who pardons all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases. Psalms 103:2-3

But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was crushed for our wickedness [our sin, our injustice, our wrongdoing]; The punishment [required] for our well-being fell on Him, And by His stripes [wounds] we are healed. Isaiah 53:5 AMP

Part IV: Christian Community Development Code of Ethics

The CCD Code of Ethics

(2) CCD Practitioners have an ethical responsibility to seek the emotional well-being of a community, relating to emotions such as joy, sorrow, fear, love, etc.

(See also: Psalms 51:10, Proverbs 17:22, Ephesians 4:32, Ephesians 6:13, 1 Peter 5:10)

When the righteous cry [for help], the Lord hears and rescues them from all their distress and troubles. The Lord is near to the heartbroken and He saves those who are crushed in spirit (contrite in heart, truly sorry for their sin).

Psalms 34:17-18 AMP

“Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.” John 14:27

(3) CCD Practitioners have an ethical responsibility to seek the intellectual well-being of a community, relating to the capacity of the mind.

(See also: Proverbs 3:5-8, Isaiah 26:3, Isaiah 41:10)

And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

Romans 12:2

Part IV: Christian Community Development Code of Ethics

The CCD Code of Ethics

(4) CCD Practitioners have an ethical responsibility to seek the social well-being of a community, relating to companionship or relationship.

(See also: Exodus 14:14, Matthew 5:44-45, Matthew 7:1, Luke 6:27-42, John 13:34-35, Romans 12:14-21, 1 Corinthians 9:19-23, 1 Corinthians 10:27, Galatians 3:26-29, Ephesians 3:6-7, Ephesians 4:1-3, 1 Peter 3:15, Rev. 7:9)

And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul; and not one of them claimed that anything belonging to him was his own, but all things were common property to them. Acts 4:32

So now wrap your heart tightly around the hope that lives within us, knowing that God always keeps His promises! Discover creative ways to encourage others and to motivate them toward acts of compassion, doing beautiful works as expressions of love. This is not the time to pull away and neglect meeting together, as some have formed the habit of doing. In fact, we should come together even more frequently, eager to encourage and urge each other onward as we anticipate that day dawning. Hebrews 10:23-25 TPT

Part IV: Christian Community Development Code of Ethics

The CCD Code of Ethics

(5) CCD Practitioners have an ethical responsibility to seek the environmental well-being of a community, relating to surrounding things, conditions, or influences.

(See also: Genesis 1:1, Job 12:7-10, Psalms 24:1, Mark 16:15, Romans 8:19-22, James 2:24)

Then the Lord God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it.

Genesis 2:15

And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation." Mark 16:15

For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities - all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. Colossians 1:16-17

(6) CCD Practitioners have an ethical responsibility to seek the spiritual well-being of a community, relating to the spirit or soul.

(See also: Psalms 139:23-24, Matthew 28:19-20, John 3:16, John 3:36, Romans 6:23, 1 Corinthians 15:58, Galatians 3:26-29, Hebrews 9:14, Revelation 7:10)

Part IV: Christian Community Development Code of Ethics

The CCD Code of Ethics

He restores my soul; He guides me in the paths of righteousness for the sake of His name.

Psalms 23:3

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, Because the Lord anointed me To bring good news to the humble; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, To proclaim release to captives And freedom to prisoners; To proclaim the favorable year of the Lord And the day of vengeance of our God; To comfort all who mourn, To grant those who mourn in Zion Giving them a garland instead of ashes The oil of gladness instead of mourning, The cloak of praise instead of a disheartened spirit. So they will be called oaks of righteousness, The planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified. Then they will rebuild the ancient ruins, They will raise up the former devastations; And they will repair the ruined cities, The desolations of many generations ... For as the earth produces its sprouts, And as a garden causes the things sown in it to spring up, So the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations. Isaiah 61:1-4; 11

Part IV: Christian Community Development Code of Ethics

The CCD Code of Ethics

(7) CCD Practitioners have an ethical responsibility to seek the economic well-being of a community, relating to the welfare of material resources and systems.

(See also: Luke 16:10-11, 1 Timothy 6:10, 1 Timothy 6:17-19, Hebrews 13:5, 1 John 2:15-17)

Now this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed.
2 Corinthians 9:6-8

And for my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.
Philippians 4:19

Part IV: Christian Community Development Code of Ethics

The CCD Code of Ethics

(8) CCD Practitioners have an ethical responsibility to seek the occupational well-being of a community, relating to ways of earning a living.

(See also: Genesis 2:15, Philippians 1:6, Philippians 3:14, 1 Timothy 3)

And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed.
2 Corinthians 9:8

Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve.
Colossians 3:23-24

As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the grace of God. 1 Peter 4:10

Part IV: Christian Community Development Code of Ethics

When We Miss It: Disobedience & Repentance

Scripture reminds us “the good person out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good; and the evil person out of the evil treasure brings forth what is evil; for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart” (Luke 6:45).

This is why we are instructed to “watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life” (Proverbs 4:23).

What we treasure matters. The fruits we produce matter. The actions of our daily life matter.

Matthew 7:24-27 cautions us that those who have their foundation on Christ and act on His biblical instruction will not fall, but those who hear and do not obey will fall. In other words, those who have learned God’s guidance on ethics and choose to ignore it are in for a rude awakening - especially when doing work in His name.

The reality of our current times is most organizations and people truly mean well. They really want to make a difference in communities around the globe. But sometimes we just miss it. We become too emotional, prideful, or rational and we miss the leading of the Holy Spirit in the middle ground.

Part IV: Christian Community Development Code of Ethics

Reconciliation within ourselves and our communities is best seen through God's story, which reminds us another world is possible.²² What we believe about God will tell us what we believe about people, which ultimately shapes our beliefs about our communities and societies.²³

Romans 2 firmly reminds us it is God's kindness that leads us to repentance. We know "he who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will find compassion" (Proverbs 28:13). When we mess up we can return to God, seek wise counsel, make right what we can, and move forward. In turn, we can see healing take place at an individual and collective level in our communities.

"A false balance is an abomination to the Lord, But a just weight is His delight. When pride comes, then comes dishonor, But with the humble is wisdom. The integrity of the upright will guide them, But the crookedness of the treacherous will destroy them." (Proverbs 11:1-3)

"Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much." (James 5:16)

Part V: A Case Study: The Model in Application

ABC Community Services is a nonprofit organization that was started by a local church, that has a vision to plant 360+ churches in Missouri, USA. ABC has taken a unique and appealing approach to community development, but the overall ethics of the organization have been called into question by its own employees who emphasize areas of ethical ambiguity including false marketing, misuse of funds, and conflicts of interest. The nonprofit primarily focuses on an after-school feeding program in rural communities through school partnerships funded by USDA grants. Unfortunately, ABC chooses eligible partnership schools in rural communities if a church plant is possible. The nonprofit site directors for the nonprofit also serve as campus pastors at any given church plant location and are paid with the USDA grant for both roles. Instead of planting churches that are equipped for localized Christian community development, ABC church is using their nonprofit community development organization as a guise to reach their church planting goals.

Recently, ABC's employees and some community members have expressed concern about the overall direction in which ABC is moving, as well as their day-to-day decisions. Employees have said ABC leadership often "over promises and under delivers." They also identified issues of nepotism, disorganization, overworked employees, and gossip.

Part V: A Case Study: The Model in Application

One employee, Hank, shared in an interview that ABC is unable to be the Community Development Corporation (CDC) they say they are because they are simply providing food and church services, not full community development as their website states. Hank feels uncomfortable with the discrepancy between what they say they are doing and how ABC is making the system work for them. He explained they are presenting “future stuff to everybody so we get more buy-in from organizations. The integrity is being compromised there in my mind, because we don’t have the services to back up what we’re talking about ... people [who] partner with us might be burned when they realize what we actually are” (Hank).²⁴

An overall lack of transparency shown at ABC certainly calls their integrity into question, even though their intentions appear good at face-value. ABC has missed the mark on ethical decision-making. They are promoting church-based community development, but they have sacrificed transparency and copowerment with communities in the process of developing their brand.

Part V: A Case Study: The Model in Application

Let's look at how ABC can use the Ethical Decision-Making Model to reconcile these ethical dilemmas:

1. Pray for God's guidance: ABC leadership would sit down as individuals, as a board, and as an organization to pray for God's guidance in their next step(s). All other major decisions would be delayed, if possible.
2. Define the competing issue(s) or ethical principles to be examined: Some ethical dilemmas ABC is experiencing include:
 - a. *Church-Based Development versus Listening to the Community*: ABC is currently putting their goal of planting 360+ churches ahead of listening to the community. While a community may need after-school feeding programs according to ABC's perspective, has the community been given a chance to openly and safely voice their opinions regarding a feeding-program or church plant? If a community wants a feeding program but does not want a church plant, how will ABC proceed?
 - b. *Transparency versus Leadership Development*: ABC's current misuse of federal USDA grant money to pay for staff's time in pastoral roles and work in the food program is producing more leaders at more church plant sites but is compromising transparency and the integrity of their work.

Part V: A Case Study: The Model in Application

b. (cont.) Can ABC be transparent about their use of funds while focusing on developing the leaders they already have? ABC must ask themselves, “how would we feel if people used the money we gave them in ways other than those for which we gave it?”²⁵

c. *Transparency versus Copowerment*: ABC staff members have a blurred view on whether they are working alongside community members or improving a community just by their presence. ABC leadership is allowing their own personal ambition of church planting to neglect copowerment with not only their communities but their own employees as well. Additionally, as their employee mentioned in his interview, ABC is currently presenting themselves as something they are not, thus misleading the government, community members, volunteers, and employees alike.

3. Gather all scripture on the issue:

a. Pay attention to commandments, principles, and examples (*see below*).

4. Study the scriptural instruction:

a. *And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. Romans 12:2*

Part V: A Case Study: The Model in Application

b. *So now wrap your heart tightly around the hope that lives within us, knowing that God always keeps His promises! Discover creative ways to encourage others and to motivate them toward acts of compassion, doing beautiful works as expressions of love. This is not the time to pull away and neglect meeting together, as some have formed the habit of doing. In fact, we should come together even more frequently, eager to encourage and urge each other onward as we anticipate that day dawning. Hebrews 10:23-25 TPT*

c. *Live in the truth and keep your promises, and the Lord will keep delighting in you, but He detests a liar. Proverbs 12:22 TPT*

d. *Before you do anything, put your trust totally in God and not in yourself. Then every plan you make will succeed. Proverbs 16:3 TPT*

e. *But above all, my fellow believers, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath; but let your yes be [a truthful] yes, and your no be [a truthful] no, so that you may not fall under judgment. James 5:12 AMP*

f. *A false balance is an abomination to the Lord, But a just weight is His delight. When pride comes, then comes dishonor, But with the humble is wisdom. The integrity of the upright will guide them, But the crookedness of the treacherous will destroy them. Proverbs 11:1-3*

Part V: A Case Study: The Model in Application

5. Apply the biblical instruction to today's context:

- a. ABC leadership and staff would seek wise counsel from spiritual mentors and community development practitioners, preferably **outside** the organization, who understand the context. This could include the Christian Community Development Association (CCDA).
- b. ABC leadership and staff would review relevant community development publications and other biblically based sources.

6. Arrive at a biblically-driven ethical decision:

- a. Ephesians 5:1-2: *Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.*
- b. ABC has multiple courses of actions they could take, some they may take simultaneously. These courses of actions could include, but are not limited to:
 - i. *Separate leadership between the church and nonprofit which clarifies responsibilities and reduces economic, social, spiritual, and occupational conflicts of interest.*

Part V: A Case Study: The Model in Application

- i. *(cont.) It is probable that ABC's goal of planting 360+ churches in one state and supplementing their church-planting with feeding programs may not be compatible. Should separate leadership be instituted, the two organizations may live in harmony, engaging in copowerment with the other as they work to create holistic, systemic change.*
- ii. *Rebrand all publications to be more transparent. Should ABC choose to focus on humanitarian aid and/or development, they need to be clear on their role(s), function(s), and goal(s) of all programming and decisions.*
- iii. *Adjust the members of the Board of Directors to be more objective.*
- iv. *Implement the CCD Code of Ethics and Decision-Making Model in daily work.*
- v. *Create a strategic plan to adjust programming to adhere to ethical principles.*
- vi. *Develop a pipeline of staff champions to promote ethical practice within the organization; simultaneously establish an ethics committee.²⁶*

Part V: A Case Study: The Model in Application

vii. *Bring in an outside consultant to create and/or facilitate “trainings-in-a-box” and interactive YouTube videos, seminars and/or online webinars, or interactive eLearning modules.*²⁷

7. Should ABC miss the mark again, they can engage in this ongoing process of ethical reconciliation and decision-making. ABC leadership would apologize and respond with humility to any relevant parties, specifically identifying the ways in which they are seeking change and input from wise counsel and the communities in which they are involved.

Part V: A Case Study: The Model in Application

In truth, all of the above recommendations may be necessary for ABC Community Services to become an ethical organization. ABC may choose to continue on as-is, neglecting the issues that have been raised. They may also choose to immediately implement changes and put all other decisions on hold. Either way, they are accountable to God in both mindset and action.

No one likes to admit they are wrong - we often find ourselves in the Parable of the Sower found in Mark 4 in which some seeds planted withered away in dead soil and others invested their roots in fruitful soil and produced thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold. Many seeds have been planted for ABC, now they must choose which type of soil they will be. Should ABC Community Services recognize the serious issues in their organization and genuinely take action to change, they must ask themselves: To what end are we willing to go to reach our church planting potential? Who will be hurt in the process?

Next Steps

Next Steps for the implementation of the Biblical Decision-Making Model and Christian Community Development Code of Ethics:

1. The Christian Community Development Association (CCDA) would approve a finalized version of the ethical decision-making model and code of ethics with even more specific standards created to assist individuals and organizations in ethical decision making.
2. The CCDA would begin to require all individuals and organizations to provide proof of implementation of the model and code for membership.
3. The CCDA would publish the ethical decision-making model and code of ethics on their website and social media as well as periodic trainings and workshops on ethics.
4. Nonprofit business and community development programs at an undergraduate and graduate level would implement the decision-making model and code of ethics into curriculum and practice settings.
5. Grant organizations and other funding sources would require proof of implementation of an ethical decision-making model and code of ethics for daily work in community development organizations for grant eligibility.
6. The ethical decision-making model and code of ethics would be reviewed, and revised if necessary, every three years to ensure clarity and relevance.

Next Steps

Adhering to the finalized and revised versions of the ethical decision-making model and code of ethics for Christian community development is beneficial for individuals and organizations as their reputation for being an ethical organization would increase, therefore increasing community support and funding. Further, an organization will be more sustainable when adhering to an ethical decision-making model and code of ethics as they will be more equipped to tackle challenges that will inevitably arise in the community development field, thus extending their community impact rather than terminating programs due to scandals or ineffectiveness.

Conclusion

Community development will be enhanced by the implementation of a decision-making model and code of ethics. Ethical ambiguity leading to ethical scandals continues to be a large concern in the community development field. There may be instances in which an organization is not acting unethically, but as a CCD practitioner we still do not agree with their choices in theory or practice. In these instances we can return to prayer and resume the ethical decision making model to guide us on how to proceed. Sometimes nothing may be done, but we must still show love. Rest assured, if there is justice to be done, God will ensure it happens in His timing. In the mean time, we can ensure our own actions are ethical in our attempts to participate in the justice-creating love and copowerment to which God leads us.

Neither our community development work nor this primer is fully perfected - revisions and much prayer are still needed as the primer is applied in various contexts. It is the work of all community members, regardless of faith tradition, who are working together to strengthen, support, and love our communities. Our foundational motivations may differ, but we are all in this together. When we work together to make ethical choices, we will all thrive.

I encourage each of us to lean on the Holy Spirit, scripture, and our faith communities as we humbly allow God to use us in His healing work.

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