

Inside Out

Chapter 6 Summary

Chapter 6 of the book *Inside Out* is titled “Moving Towards Christian Social Entrepreneurship.” As the last chapter of the book, this chapter ties together many ideas from earlier chapters to paint a vision of what churches can do in our current culture to reach people and affect positive change.

The authors define a Christian social entrepreneur as “...a person who establishes an organization to solve an issue or a problem or to bring about a positive change for a group of people or a community because of their love of Jesus and a desire for others to know the same love.” They list a number of characteristics for success. A faith community moving towards social entrepreneurship should:

- Care about its community.
- Have shifted (or be in the process of shifting) from being “...building, Sunday, pastor, and offering-plate-centric.” For faith communities that have not yet begun to shift, there need to be “...enough resources to handle both the traditional desires of the congregation and the innovative ministry to reach new people.”
- Be culturally and emotionally competent. (This was covered in chapter 5 of the book.)
- Have a significant number of disciples that want to focus on “giving away Jesus to others”.
- Decide to pursue Christian social entrepreneurship through prayer and discernment.

The authors make the point that social entrepreneurship is very Wesleyan. John Wesley “...created businesses that provided jobs for the poor. He launched a publishing business.” And “Methodists were once known to build and operate schools, orphanages, and hospitals because they were needed in the community, and the profits could be reinvested into the ministry.”

The authors stress that the church needs to return to being part of and actively participating in its surrounding community. “When we separate the church from the community, the church becomes insular and loses relevancy and competency for reaching the people in its mission field.”

The good news is that studies have shown that Gen Zs and Millennials (which together make up more than half the population) are very interested in social justice and are willing to work to help make lasting impacts in their communities.

The authors caution, however, that the church needs to not simply meet the tangible needs of our neighbors. There are many non-profit organizations that work to meet those needs, and the authors refer to this type of service as “transactional”. The church needs to also address the spiritual needs of those we serve. This work involves developing relationships with our community that lead to future transformational change. So, we need to move from transactional solutions to relational and transformative solutions. The authors provided an example of both.

The example of a *transactional solution* given by the authors is one where a school counselor identified a need that some of the children in the school needed socks. So, the church hosted a drive and collected socks for the school. The church served the students in a wonderful way, but

the donated socks filled a temporary need and the donation was, in effect, a one-time transaction. Catalina does a fantastic job providing these types of solutions for our community, for example with Blenman Elementary. We should continue this great work. The authors are suggesting, however, that we should move to also providing relational solutions for our community.

Using that same school scenario, the authors described an example of a *relational solution*. When the school counselor identified the need for socks, more probing questions revealed the reasons that children might not have socks. The counselor shared that some school families were struggling with finding jobs and managing their finances. After many conversations and contemplation, the counselor felt that offering the parents budgeting classes, interviewing and resume support, and possibly even help with dressing for interviews would help the families. Doing this work involved building relationships with the parents and ended up being transformational for their families.

So, how do we do this? How do we identify relational needs in our community? We need to get out into our community and meet with community and business leaders. We need to listen carefully to what they are saying, but also to what they are not saying. When they are asked about the needs of the surrounding community, they will often identify problems and solutions that are transactional in nature. But we need to keep asking questions to see if relational problems and solutions exist that might be causing or driving the transactional needs. This is what the authors refer to as “mining deeper”. The authors also caution not to hear one idea and run with it. Because we cannot address all the needs of our community, we should gather a broad base of information, so we can identify trends and overlapping needs.

When we’ve conducted our community conversations, the authors describe how to move forward. We should:

1. Gather and analyze demographic information. This can be done while having community conversations.
2. Take an inventory of all the assets that are available to us. Assets include money, buildings, parking lots, and people’s passions and gifts. This can also be done while having community conversations.
3. Using all the above information, talk through possible scenarios and develop actual business plans and cash flow projections. This is the “viability test”.
4. When we have an idea that passes the viability test, determine the steps for launching it.

If this sounds like what you might be familiar with in the business world, it is. Christian social entrepreneurship involves being able to run a business, while loving people and bringing them to Jesus. The authors state that “Christian social entrepreneurship can and should be both ministry AND income-generating.”

The authors offered these examples of solutions that both generate income and minister to the community:

- Community gardens
- Shared workspaces
- Shared artist spaces
- Business incubators

- Coffee shops

Note that all the above need to include “intentional, relationship building opportunities” to be considered ministries to the community.

This was a jam-packed chapter and I have only touched on the highlights. But the exciting news is that Catalina is on a path towards Christian social entrepreneurship! Our Catalina Hub Team has been and will continue having conversations with community leaders, to begin developing relationships and identifying community needs. We have also been looking at and analyzing demographic information using Mission Insight reports. If you are interested in being part of this interesting and rewarding work, please contact me, Laurie Campbell (laurieandscott.campbell@gmail.com).