



Loudonville Community Church

Volume 1 - Number 25  
The week of May 1, 2016

*Doing Justice Together in Our City*

Dr. John Perkins  
Amos 5:24 & Micah 6:8

Mission Possible Conference

THIS WEEK'S CORE STATEMENT

Profile of Compassion in Action

*There was a time, several years ago, when I didn't have any money. I was just out of college, didn't have a job, and was trying to pay rent, student loans, bills and to eat (if there was anything left). It was the first time in my life that I felt the real stress of poverty. It could have been worse—I had an education—but I couldn't find a job and didn't know when I would. I was two months late on rent and looking at eviction, desperately trying to sell everything I owned to raise the funds. Then one morning I woke up and couldn't walk. My leg was swollen to three times its size and I was in incredible pain. After years of ballet spent abusing my feet, I'd neglected to care for the blister on my heel, and now it was festering. I knew I needed medical attention but didn't have money, let alone insurance. Lucky for me, I found Dr. Bob.*

*Doctor Robert Paeglow is a general practitioner in Albany, NY. He was in his mid 30s when he realized he wanted to be more than a quality control technician—he wanted to help people. He started medical school at 36, graduated at the top of his class and opened a practice in the poorest neighborhood of Albany. He takes no salary and treats people in need at no charge. When I hobbled through the door of his clinic with my swollen leg, Dr. Bob saw me immediately, got me antibiotics and saved my life. I was a kid—I didn't know the danger I was in from the fast-moving staph infection circulating through my blood stream. I would have waited at home if not for the promise of free healthcare on Dr. Bob's website. If I'd waited, I wouldn't be here today. Dr. Bob saved my life.*



*through my*

*He doesn't just save lives here at home, he travels the world to offer his medical services to those in need internationally. After the massive earthquake ravaged Haiti in 2010, Dr. Bob organized a group of volunteers from the Albany area to travel to Port-au-Prince to help with the relief effort.*

*While Dr. Bob's work is extraordinary—going far above and beyond what's expected of a doctor in America—it has inspired other doctors to donate their time to worthy causes as well. It's a domino effect, starting with one selfless doctor who exemplifies the spirit of generosity and care we all aspire to emulate in our own volunteer work. A profile on CBS says that, though Dr. Bob classifies himself as low-income, living in the same neighborhood as the people he serves, he may well be the richest doctor in the country.*

Annie M.  
February 14, 2012  
www.journeys4good.com

## SUMMARIZING the message

I am really excited to be speaking here today. I have spent my last 57 years becoming a Christian. I grew up with a non-Christian background in Mississippi and dropped out of school somewhere between the third and fifth grade and never went back. I did not see much Christianity and knew little about it because my family did not participate often in church. I was 27 years old when I came to Christ. Then I began to understand Christianity more. The reality was that in my community Christianity had become a therapeutic religious system that had very little to do with the social and economic conditions of the people. African Americans adjusted themselves to the ever-present racial oppression and responded with a religion that focused on things like healing people so that they could function within the system.

So I came to faith in that context. I began to read the Bible and study it. I was trying to learn about Christianity and how it works through the New Testament and what the early church was like. I found that I had to learn all over what I had been taught about Christianity growing up. During this time of learning, I went back to Mississippi from California where I had moved. While I was trying to express to our people this newfound faith, all kinds of opportunities opened up for me to share the gospel. I had an area that circled about one hundred miles, and I got to go into the public schools. I ended up with 15 high schools and elementary schools and two junior colleges that I visited on a monthly basis. In that process, I became a teacher, teaching the Word of God. Then I worked to establish the Christian Community Development Association (CCDA) and have become a big part of that movement in America and the rest of the world.

The CCDA has put together what we have come to call *holistic* Christian community development. **We define that as the whole church taking on the whole gospel.** We think in terms of the universality of the church to understand all of the vision within it. We are taking the whole church on a whole mission to the whole world. It seems to me that this mission fits what Jesus did when He was incarnated God here on earth. We believe that is what He did after His death and resurrection. Jesus sent the disciples out into the world by saying something very unique to them. He said go into all the world and very carefully disciple the nations and teach them to observe the life of Christ and how He lived. As He was, so we are to be in the world. We see this in all four Gospels, and Luke continued to tell this story in Acts by looking at the church as it began to emerge.

While I'm excited about all the new church planting, particularly in my country, but also around the world, the big excitement is that these church plants are confronting the great evil, the evil of enslavement and oppression. Confronting the great evil is what I call justice. I see justice as a management and stewardship issue. It is really about us understanding who owns the earth. In the biblical account, the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof and all that dwells therein. You cannot understand justice apart from being a good steward. It seems like that is really what it is about. If you come at justice as just a social issue, you miss the full understanding. Another social issue is not radical enough in our society, so justice must include stewardship. If you follow Jesus' teaching here on earth, He talked of God as the Creator and that we have responsibility over that creation. The poor are those who do not have open access to the land and the management of it. Jesus challenges this system in His parables in terms of stewardship when He said I have come that you might have life, and life more abundantly.

We should not over-embrace the world's political, social and economic structures and deify them in life. In our society we have deified capitalism instead of using a prophetic voice within it or calling it to be accountable. But the church is to be God's prophetic people. They are to be the children of God and the continuation of the incarnated Christ on earth. The idea is that God, through the Spirit, is living out that life in us, and we are to be that prophetic people. We are to be a witness to society and a witness of peace within the church. We are to accept that suffering and pain will come, but not stop our mission. Rather we are to go forth in it. Since the church was established on the rock so that the gates of hell cannot overcome it, the church is to be this witness and force in the world and follow Christ's teachings.

What I now see as the weakness of the church is the life of discipleship. We are making people Christians before we disciple them. The church at Ephesus is the exemplary church in terms of discipleship based on the teachings of Paul. I think we all accept that our teachings on discipleship come from Paul (and a little also from Peter and John), but what we have to worry about in the church is the apostasy and the turning away because of false teachers in the church. For example, I think we have a very serious problem in the church with personality cults. Instead of praising God for His redemptive work and what He can work out through us, we have twisted Christianity into a financial prosperity church, which is not being challenged. The issue is how do we put Jesus back into the center of the church as the real Shepherd of the flock and the sheep? Where Jesus is the leader and the pastors are the under-shepherds, who are careful not to make the church just their own? I see that as a real weakness, and I see that weakness spreading throughout the world.

As I get information from the field about these glowing churches in Africa and other parts of the world, it grieves me that we are not challenging the prosperity gospel with discipleship and teachings in the Word of God. We need to choose Paul's teachings in Ephesus, including his warning to the church when he was on his way to Jerusalem. This is a big warning, and it is applied to all the teachings of the church as they relate to false teachers and personality cults that would like to replace Christ and become heads of churches. I think this is very, very serious because we have a lot of churches not demonstrating the power of discipleship as they should be.

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This is an unedited oral address.

Dr. John Perkins. "The Whole Church on a Whole Mission to the Whole World," *The New Urban Journal*, Edition Five 2014; ISSN 2201-2003, pp. 11-20.

This is the reason why I am so committed to the multiracial church because racism, bigotry and tribalism are really just economic exploitation at heart. Now every time we turn around the church is exploiting the poor people, and they are not being taught. I am in some ways an example of that. I think it is great to know a lot about theology, I believe that. People all over are establishing centers at colleges and universities in my name and giving scholarships and things like that. But within the church I think that the Spirit of God can use the feeblest people, and I see that in life too. I go to jails and mental institutions and many times I can find people there who have a greater understanding of the biblical texts than the theologians in the schools. I believe that the Holy Spirit is the main teacher of the Word of God. Jesus taught that when the Holy Spirit comes, He will lead us and guide us into church and will guide us to the things to come. Therefore, churches have the responsibility to disciple people and teach them the Word of God. I believe that we are falling short on making that discipleship happen.

The principles that undergird this approach to discipleship have come out of our struggle as we have read the Word of God and tried to put together a philosophy of development that included a holistic approach to humanity's problems. The Word of God is central because it is when people are obedient to the Word of God that the power of God is released in people's lives. Somewhere between hearing God's voice and believing it, faith is born. Faith comes by hearing the Word of God with the idea of obeying it. As we try to share in this holistic, social, economic work of the church, the principle is that we are actively doing social projects for the public good, such as providing healthcare and meeting the needs of the people and the church. We are at the very least reflecting the Kingdom of God that is coming.

We believe that the church has to be a community of alternatives, that is, an alternative to the world's systems that have fallen and an alternative people here on earth. Of course, the greatest miracle of all that we should be part of is breaking down the racial and cultural barriers in society instead of going around them. God's radical love must fuel us, and we must find ways to express that love in action. I hear this call to love when Paul says I am not ashamed of the gospel for it is the power of God to bring salvation. I think at times the church has minimized the power of the gospel and has accommodated heresy within the church. This destroys the power of the gospel. We need to nurture people in this holistic truth that Jesus Christ is absolutely our Shepherd. I am afraid of these personality cults because I am afraid they are not getting at the deep issues, but are looking at success based on materialism.

Today many Christians do not know how to read the Bible with enough depth. As a result, we have created a long history of disobeying the central truth of the Word of God, and we are not seeing its power as present in our society. As the church we are losing our first love. Yes, there was good fellowship last night, and I felt joy being a part of the Malaysian people. I know in most places people enjoy us Americans singing and dancing, and those are wonderful things, but all cultures are fallen and all cultures need to be redeemed. We too easily forget to depend on each other even as we bring people together. We leave them in their little cultural villages and behaviors without challenging them, and if we are not careful, we start to deify a culture instead of challenging a fallen society. The key of love is that it is stronger than racism and bigotry, for the world will know we are Christians by our love.

Discipleship is a journey. In this holistic approach we find three roads of a well-disciplined life: The Damascus Road, the Emmaus Road, and the Jericho Road. These are images to show us what it would look like to be an effective, New Testament-like disciple. These three roads are a journey, the pilgrim's progress. We are on our way somewhere, and all of the tribes are there, but we are keeping our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.

**The first road is the Damascus Road.** It gives us a picture of an evil person made good. You all know the story of the apostle Paul. He was an intellectual, a genius. The Christians were witnessing in Jerusalem; they were living in community and turning the city upside down. At Pentecost there were people from every language under heaven. That is important for challenging our thinking when we accommodate racism or tribalism because at Pentecost we see a miracle that is the radical love that can burn through the racial and cultural barriers. Jesus demonstrated that in His own life and ministry in the villages. In a word, the church has become too easy because we have benefited from the exploitation of others. Life becomes very cheap.

But the first road is the road of conversion, of becoming a Christian, being born again. You can see this in the story where Esau and Jacob were fighting over the birthright. Eventually there came a time when Jacob was reborn from above. You can see this in Jesus' talk with Nicodemus. Nicodemus was the great leader of Israel and an educator and historian. But when he was confronted with Jesus, Jesus told him you must be born again. Nicodemus was confused, but Jesus told him that even though he was a great teacher, he did not recognize that Jacob had to become Israel and when he became Israel he was born again, born into the Kingdom of God. Jacob came to the end of his own trickery and at the end of his own trickery he was born again, and then out of that came that relationship with his brother.

Conversion is not a human effort. People are not born again because we make it happen for them. No one comes to God unless God Himself draws that person. Salvation is absolutely by grace. Grace is all of the attributes of God towards humankind in redemption. All of those great principles are put together, and they are called grace. God uses grace to bring us to Himself as people obey and teach the Word of God. The Word of God is God's creative power released in the world. The world is created by Him, and by faith we understand the world is held together by the Word of God. So the ability to teach and disciple people is what we equip people with when we send them into the world. I can't overemphasize that.

We see this first road lived out in this mean apostle. He persecuted the church. He participated in killing Stephen, and it filled him with such anger (and joy really) because of the message Stephen preached. Stephen's message was one of the most intelligent, historical messages in the New Testament. You see, Stephen's message confronted Paul's arrogance. Paul believed that he had learned from the best teachers, and so he killed Stephen. Then Paul went to the high priest and got letters to arrest even more followers of Christ. Paul knew about the Christians because he heard they were turning the world upside down with their love for each other and their teachings about Jesus Christ and the Word of God.

After the stoning of Stephen, Paul ended up on the Damascus Road where he met the Savior. God spoke to Paul. Paul heard the voice, yes; but more importantly, he believed and came to know with certainty that the voice was the voice of God. On the Damascus Road the apostle was handcuffed, or we could say, embraced by God's love. When he was struck down, he heard Jesus say Saul, Saul, why are you so mean? Why are you persecuting me? In an angry outburst, Saul said who are you? The voice said I am Jesus. In this encounter the apostle was apprehended by God's love, and he wanted to be apprehended again and feel the squeeze of love that he first felt on the Damascus Road. Then he cried out and heard the voice and believed. He asked Lord, what is it you would have me do? The voice spoke through Ananias I have called you to send you far away to the Gentiles to have you appear before kings, judges and governors of the world to turn people from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to the power of God. At the end of his ministry Paul testified I was not disobedient to that heavenly vision.

So the first road is conversion where you come to know Jesus Christ. You confess your sins, and turn from your sins. For three days after encountering God's voice, Paul confessed his sin. Ananias was involved in this process so that Paul would not be a cult leader. All disciples of Jesus Christ need others involved in their lives. You need people to disciple you so that you can live a life of discipleship. We really cannot do it alone; we need the small groups in our churches; we need the personal relationships we have with each other. That helps us with some sense of humility. The church should be a place that together equips the saints for the work of the ministry.

When we deeply, radically love each other and care for each other, we can confess our sins to one another, which is a part of conversion. It is there we discover we are blind like Paul on the Damascus Road. When Paul met up with Ananias, his eyes were opened to a vision from God. It is important to follow that vision: God calls us and He gives us skill. We need to seek that vision, learn our gift and serve Christ in unity. The gifts ought to be used in the ministry of the church. People say to me that they are discovering their gifts for their own personal ministry, but I teach them that their gifts are supposed to be used and exercised within the body of Christ. Gifts are for the nurturing of the saints first and foremost, so we need each other. The body needs to commission us to go out and be an extension of God's grace and love as we ordain people. Then the church needs to send them forth, so that there is a sense of responsibility and you are not on your own.

**The second road is the Emmaus Road.** The Emmaus Road is living the resurrected life. Christ is living His life through us. The Christian life is the out-living of the in-living Christ. Prayer is listening, so that Jesus the Good Shepherd can lead us and guide us. Oh yes, God tells us to talk to Him and to call on Him. God already knows everything we tell Him, but we need to affirm that with our own lives and words. We have to confess with our mouth to make a promise to God, and make a promise to people around us. It is important to live in that promise and be faithful in light of that promise that God has made to us.

On the Emmaus Road are Christ and the resurrection. As the men were going back home, they discovered that Jesus was walking with them. That is an experience that I love. God needs to walk with us and talk with us, and the big thing is that He needs to tell us that we belong to Him. Out of that we have the joy of the Christian life. It should be joyful that God has enlisted us to be involved in His redemptive plan. That should be enough. That should be enough for our pride that this God of heaven, the God that said let there be light, has shined light into our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the love of God as we follow the Great Shepherd of the sheep. So the Emmaus Road is the road of discipleship.

**The last road is the Jericho Road.** These roads ought to be lived together at the same time. It is not that we perfect one and then the next. We are perfecting them all as we obey. As soon as we are converted we should be telling someone else the gospel. So the Jericho Road is the road of service. The road of rescuing the perishing, caring for the dying and snatching them from bondage to sin. It is the Jericho Road that goes across racial barriers. That is the great truth, the great miracle. I cannot get over it, and I am not ashamed of the gospel because it is the power to bring Jews and Gentiles together in one body for in Christ for there is no Jew or Gentile, slave or free, but we are one in Jesus Christ. That is the beauty and the miracle of miracles when God brings humanity into relationship with Himself and in relationship with others.

There is great joy when we are able to experience the overcoming of these barriers. The Jericho Road is what happens when there is radical love that is turned into compassion. Our God had so much compassion that He put Himself in the condition of human beings. In the story of the Good Samaritan, which took place on the Jericho Road, the religious teachers were in a hurry as they had some other things they thought were more important than compassion, more important than life. A man was dying and in pain, groaning, and they pretended that they did not hear him because they had other issues. So they left him in the ditch. But the Jericho Road, the holistic gospel, is caring for the whole need of broken people, as the Good Samaritan did. If you are compassionate, then you are compelled to reach out in love. Love is giving; it is the greatest gift we have.

I think that God has brought us together. I think we are now at a crucial place in the world. We face this discipleship challenge to be God's people and expect a miracle. We expect the sign, and, yes, the problem may be too big for us, but that is when God provides miracles; miracles that His gospel might go forth in the world and that people might know that He is alive. The gospel is that power if it is shared without compromising it in a way that makes it lose its power. We must not become the church of Laodicea, so compromised because the Christians thought they were rich and in need of nothing. They were doing religion, but they did not know their own misery and poverty. That is my warning and also my encouragement. I think we are at a unique time. I know in my country I am seeing a new generation of people who are beginning to see diversity and difference as a value, as enrichments to their lives. I felt the same about the Malaysian people last night in the experience we had together, and I will leave with that experience as a true enrichment to my life.

### **EXPLORING** the passage through discussion

1. Dr. Perkins' faithfulness to the gospel demanded that he be both an evangelical and a civil rights advocate. He discovered that many evangelicals opposed the civil rights movement. Why did the evangelical church mostly miss the opportunity to being a voice for justice?
2. Our response to the poor is a crucial test of our faithfulness to the gospel. Do you believe that Scripture supports this statement? Why or why not?
3. Who are the oppressed in the capital district? What does it mean to bring liberty to these oppressed people? What can our church do to help?
4. What is the one needy neighborhood or community you know most about? Take a moment and each of you close your eyes and imagine yourself walking up and down the streets of that community. List the needs that you see. Imagine what ministries could be in that community 10 years from now. List them too.
5. What kind of reasons do people give for volunteering to serve the poor for a day, a week, or longer?
6. What has God said to you through the ministry of Dr. John or during our local mission conference?

## THE MISSION OF LOUDONVILLE COMMUNITY CHURCH

We are committed to reaching and teaching people to become devoted followers of Jesus Christ, connecting them to one another and sending them to serve their families, communities and world.

### 10 CORE BELIEFS OF A DISCIPLE

#### **Authority of the Bible** *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

We believe the Bible to be the inspired, the only infallible, authoritative Word of God.

#### **The Godhead** *2 Corinthians 13:14*

We believe that there is one God, eternally existent in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

#### **The Deity and Sinlessness of Christ** *Colossians 2:9*

We believe in the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, in His virgin birth, in His sinless life.

#### **The Sufficient Atonement of Christ** *2 Corinthians 5:19-21*

We believe in His vicarious and atoning death through His shed blood.

#### **The Resurrection and Return of Christ** *Acts 1:3, 9-11*

We believe in His bodily resurrection, in His ascension to the right hand of the Father, and in His personal return in power and glory.

#### **Salvation By Grace** *Ephesians 2:8-9*

We believe that for the salvation of lost and sinful man, regeneration by the Holy Spirit is absolutely essential and that a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

#### **The Ministry of the Holy Spirit** *John 14:16*

We believe in the present ministry of the Holy Spirit by whose indwelling the Christian is enabled to live a godly life.

#### **Unity in Christ** *Ephesians 2:14-17*

We believe in the spiritual unity of all believers in our Lord Jesus Christ.

#### **Eternity** *Revelation 21:22-27*

We believe in the resurrection of both the saved and the lost; they that are saved unto the resurrection of life and they that are lost unto the resurrection of damnation.

#### **Stewardship** *1 Timothy 6:17-19*

We believe that everything we have or own belongs to God.

### 10 CORE PRACTICES OF A DISCIPLE

#### **Undiluted Worship** *Matthew 22:37-40*

Loving the Lord God with all of our physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual vigor and, my neighbor as myself.

#### **Constant Abiding** *John 15:1-11*

Abiding in Christ in order to be faithful and bear fruit.

#### **Bible Study** *Hebrews 4:12*

Reading the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for daily life.

#### **Desperate Prayer** *Psalms 66:16-20*

Praying to God to know Him, laying requests before Him and, finding direction for daily life.

#### **Biblical Community** *Acts 2:44-47*

Fellowshipping with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, other people's lives and, in the world.

#### **Spiritual Gifts** *Romans 12:4-6*

Using my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

#### **Total Forgiveness** *Ephesians 4:30*

Practicing forgiving others as God has forgiven me in Christ.

#### **Tangible Compassion** *Matthew 25:31-46*

Showing compassion to those in need and so minister to Jesus Himself.

#### **Generous Giving** *2 Corinthians 8:7*

Giving away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

#### **God Space** *Ephesians 6:19-20*

Increasing the quantity and quality of our gospel conversations.

## 10 CORE VIRTUES OF A DISCIPLE

### **Love - a sincere affection for others** *1 John 4:10-12*

Love is acting in someone else's interest no matter who they may be, no matter how you feel, and no matter what it costs.

### **Joy - a delight unaffected by circumstances** *John 15:11*

An inner delight in God that is sustained in spite of the changing seasons of life.

### **Peace - an abiding sense of harmony** *Philippians 4:6-7*

Relationships are free from friction. Positively, it describes harmonious relations with others in the church.

### **Patience - a willingness to stick with things** *Proverbs 3:3-4*

Being willing to live with a difficult situation for a long time—even if things are slow to change or never change.

### **Kindness - a sense of compassion in the heart** *Job 6:14*

An inner disposition that puts others at ease and out of which kind actions flow.

### **Goodness - a goodness that flows outwardly** *1 Thess. 5:15*

Choosing to do the right things in my relationships with others.

### **Faithfulness - an unwavering loyalty** *Psalm 26:3*

Being the kind of people who keep our word to one another.

### **Gentleness/Humility - an attitude of humility without any entitlement; a lack of self-awareness** *Philippians 4:5; 2:3-4*

Gentleness is power and strength under God's control.

Humility is considering others above myself, if I consider myself at all.

### **Self-Control - an ability to direct your energy wisely**

*Titus 2:11-13*

The strength to restrain our desires, emotions, and actions has to come from within rather than from some outside source.

### **Hope - a certainty of what is to come** *Hebrews 6:19-20*

Coping with the hardships of life and with death because of hope in Christ.

Each week this Bible Study will feature either a core belief, practice or virtue vital for growing disciples.

**# OT in 52**  
(52 weeks through the Old Testament)

**OLD TESTAMENT SCRIPTURE READING IN A YEAR**

Monday, May 1 thru Saturday, May 8  
1 Samuel 23-24, 25-27, 28-31, 2 Samuel 1-2, 3-5, 6-9

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