

THE IDENTITY-DEPENDENCY SPIRAL

BRIGHT HOPE NEWS



I recently heard a story about a man from the West who decided he would help disadvantaged people in a poor country. He visited and found a group of young men that was struggling and homeless. He offered to help. They began to call him 'papa' and he began to pay their bills. They were initially very grateful, and he was just happy to make a difference. Over time he visited more often and handed over more money. The requests become a bit more...demanding. The man from the West began to share what he was doing and he was lauded by his friends. "Look at the amazing work you are doing!". He started a newsletter with photos of him and the people he was helping. People praised his work. The young men, in the meantime, told him he needed to pay for their courses and training because they wanted very good jobs down the track. He paid the bills, and all was going well, until he died unexpectedly. Nothing had been done to help the young men provide for themselves and they had become used to resources well beyond their peers. They were left in a terrible situation. Stressed, alone, and helpless.

What went wrong here?

Sadly, this is an all-too-common example of what we see at Bright Hope World. It is what we – or at least I – call the 'identity-dependency spiral'. A person gets involved in ministry to the poor because they want to make a difference (which is great). But somewhere along the way their role starts to become their identity. It starts to become how others see them and how they see themselves. To feed this sense of identity, people need to create dependency in those they are helping. They have to keep giving in order to elicit appreciation and respect. And like a drug, the dosage needs to get bigger as you go. The last thing a person whose identity is wrapped up in doing this kind of work wants is for the people they are helping to become independent of them and stand on their own – "who would I be then?"

To be clear, I think every one of us involved in ministry to the poor is tempted by this. We are often celebrated and looked up to by others (or at least that's what some of my colleagues tell me..) and we can be tempted to believe our own press. Danger comes when our decision making is more informed by our desire to protect our sense of significance, rather than empower the poor to provide for their own families.

Bright Hope World's commitment here is to avoid dependency at all costs. Sometimes this means we have to show 'tough love' when dependency has crept in to a relationship. Sometimes the giving tap has to be turned off. This is horrible. It hurts – us and them.

To make sure we don't go too far down into this spiral, we must continually remind ourselves that our identity lies in Christ and Christ alone. We are his servants, and this work is his. Our goal is to love people in the purest and least sentimental sense of the word, and to ensure the glory is reflected back to the source.

Fraser Scott

Executive Director

In our last newsletter we reported on the disappearance of Marley Purdue, the son of our Income Generation Director Jarrod Purdue and his wife Debra, and the grandson of our Chairman Rob Purdue and his wife Heather.

While we would love to report good news here, the family recently held a service to celebrate Marley's life and acknowledge his passing, despite having no real clarity on exactly what occurred.

We are buoyed by Marley's faith but stand in grief with the Purdues at their loss. This is an impossibly difficult situation and so we all lean on God for strength here.

At the same time as we reported about Marley, we were also praying for Kevin Honore who was very sick and in hospital with a liver infection.

We are delighted to report that the unstoppable Kevin bounced back from his illness and then jumped on a plane to supervise important meetings in Egypt, India, the Philippines and Nepal. There were some stern words of caution, but our Kevin isn't able to be kept away from our partners for too long! We are so grateful he is doing fine now and back to fighting strength.

We have felt a real burden to pray during this time. We often pray for our partners but realise the need to pray just as fervently for our team. Please join us in this.



We recently received the following personal testimony from our partner in Thailand...

"I'm Pao, a leader at Top Kids. I grew up in a low-income family of street vendors. The community around me was full of temptations – drug dealing, alcoholism, and family violence. I was often left to fend for myself as everyone in my family had to work. From the age of seven, I had to get myself ready for school every morning."

"At twelve, I dropped out of primary school, and my grandmother kicked me out of the house. I spent time with friends and got involved in destructive ways without understanding the consequences. At thirteen, my health declined, and I was arrested for drug possession. I ended up in a juvenile detention centre. I felt utterly ashamed and hopeless. For the first two weeks, I cried every night, feeling like I had no dreams or purpose left. Then, in October 2011, Cheunjit, who was involved in prison ministry (THA07), brought a Christian team from Korea to visit the detention centre. They shared Bible stories, sang songs, played games, and offered such encouragement. I felt Jesus loved me. He lifted me up, comforted me, and gave me hope. From that point on, I welcomed Jesus into my life."

"Now I'm 28 years old. My wife Pupae and I serve full-time in the Top Kids children's ministry, helping to build dreams, faith, smiles, and lives right here in this slum community. My prayer is that the lost children here will meet Jesus just as I did. God bless you and thank you."

Read more at <https://www.brighthopeworld.com/partnerships.asp?pid=88>.

BRIGHT HOPE WORLD OFFICE CHRISTMAS CLOSURE DATES

The Bright Hope World office will be closed from Wednesday 24th December and will reopen on Tuesday 6th January. The last La Mai coffee orders for 2025 need to be in by lunchtime on Monday 15th December to be sent before Christmas. Normal coffee ordering will resume on the 5th of January. Standing orders due during this period will be sent out prior to Christmas.



1. Please pray that we continue to work diligently and with focus to help our partners avoid dependency and that we all ensure our identities remain rooted in Christ and not in our work.
2. Pray for Pao, and all the other young people who have had their lives transformed by the ministry of both Cheunjit in the Remand Centres and Prasert and her team at Top Kids.
3. Please continue to pray for Jarrod and Debra Purdue, and for Rob and Heather Purdue. A service to celebrate Marley's life was held on 2nd December.
4. Please also pray for our wider team. We are reminded that we serve in the midst of a spiritual battle.
5. Pray for all our partners over the upcoming weeks as the Christmas period can often add a lot of extra stress and pressure to already difficult situations.



Bright Hope World, PO Box 8928, Christchurch 8440, New Zealand
Phone: (03) 341 0933 | Fax: (03) 341 3363

brighthopeworld.com | facebook.com/brighthopeworld | lamai.co.nz | facebook.com/lamaicoffeenz