TOWARDS A RELEVANT MINISTRY AMONG THE POOR.
DEVELOPING A COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGY FOR MISSION IN INFORMAL SETTLEMENT COMMUNITIES WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE ORANGE FARM COMMUNITY

By

MATHOLOSE PAULUS NTSHUMAYELO

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SUMMARY

The topic for my study is: “Towards a relevant ministry amongst the poor. Developing a comprehensive strategy for mission in informal settlement communities with special reference to the Orange Farm Community”. The study aims at developing the best strategy the church can use in ministering effectively in the areas of the poor. The Orange Farm Informal Settlement has been used as reference.

The informal settlement communities in South Africa are mushrooming rapidly on a daily basis. There are millions of poor people who are staying in these areas. From the South African perspective, they constitute the largest unclaimed frontier Christian mission has encountered in recent history. They stay in houses made of plywood, corrugated iron, plastics, bricks, etc. The panoramic view of the informal settlement is unbearable and overwhelming. Most of the people are unemployed, illiterate, HIV-AIDS affected and infected, drug abusers, prostitutes, homeless, widows and orphans. The data given in this study shows that they are a diverse group and that their needs are deepening. This thesis attempts to develop comprehensive missionary strategies in addressing the problems of the poor in the informal settlement communities.

The church cannot, and should not relinquish its evangelistic mission in these areas, as it is obliged to minister in word and deed. It is called to
preach the good news to the poor. Christ’s compassion for the poor was holistic, He was concerned with the poor and the marginalized, their sick bodies, empty stomachs, and perishing souls. Both his words and his works were expressions of his compassion for the poor people.

The church of Jesus Christ is called to bear witness in the present context of the poor. The kingdom of Jesus Christ is to be advanced in the informal settlement communities through a series of actions that are identifiably Christian in content and style and that bring overall health and healing to poor people in need.

The church needs to develop authentic urban mission strategies to reach specific ethnic communities and multiply churches in the informal settlement communities. We need to remember that informal settlement communities are not single homogeneous units, but conglomerates of different groups and they require a specially designed missionary strategy.

The departure point for this thesis is biblical. Chapters Two outlines a number of biblical passages from the Old and New Testament and provides us with examples of outstanding urban ministries, which gives us important insight into God’s will for serving the poor. Chapter Three illustrates that throughout history, churches have had a deep concern for the poor and the oppressed. Chapter Four explains that evangelism is part
of the mission of the Church. Chapter Five interprets the results and analyses the data of the empirical research that was done in Orange Farm. Chapter Six proposes models for ministering for the poor in the informal settlement communities. I conclude my study in Chapter Seven by referring to the research question that I introduced at the beginning of my study and further by looking at areas that need further research.
ORANGE FARM INFORMAL SETTLEMENT PHOTOGRAPH

(ARIAL VIEW)
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