

Conference Session 2.3: Justice – Health and Charity

Cure International:

An Example of ‘Best Practices’ in the area of Health and Charity

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Introduction

In 2007, 138 Muslim scholars and intellectuals, shocked the Christian world with the publication of an open letter to the heads of most major Christian organizations and Christians everywhere, entitled “A Common Word Between You and Us”. (ACW) In this letter, they pointed out that the basis of both Christianity and Islam is Love of God and Love of our Neighbor. These founding principles are pointed to strongly through both the Bible and the Qur’an. When one of the Pharisees challenged Jesus by asking which is the greatest commandment in the Law. “Jesus said to him, ‘You shall love the lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.” (Matthew, 22:34–40)

As quoted in the ACW letter Moreover, the Prophet Muhammad said of the whole Qur’an : “The best remembrance is: ‘There is no god but God’ ...2 “2 Sunan Al-Tirmidhi, Kitab Al-Da’awat, 462/5, no. 3383; Sunan Ibn Majah, 1249/2.

And what does the Qur’an say about love of neighbor? Quoting from the ACW document.

“However, empathy and sympathy for the neighbour—and even formal prayers—are not enough. They must be accompanied by generosity and self-sacrifice. God says in the Holy Qur’an:

It is not righteousness that ye turn your faces²⁰ to the East and the West; but righteous is he who believeth in God and the Last Day and the angels and the Scripture and the prophets; and giveth wealth, for love of Him, to kinsfolk and to orphans and the needy and the wayfarer and to those who ask, and to set slaves free; and observeth proper worship and payeth the poor-due. And those who keep their treaty when they make one, and the patient in tribulation and adversity and time of stress. Such are they who are sincere. Such are the pious. (Al-Baqarah , 2:177)

And also:

Ye will not attain unto righteousness until ye expend of that which ye love. And whatsoever ye expend, God is Aware thereof. (Aal ‘Imran , 3:92)

Without giving the neighbour what we ourselves love, we do not truly love God or the neighbour.”

There are two questions that remain to be answered. Who is our neighbor and what does it mean to love our neighbor. Jesus gives an explanation to the first question in the story of the Good Samaritan in Mark 10:25 - 29.

25 And a lawyer stood up and put Him to the test, saying, “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” 26 And He said to him, “What is written in the Law? How does it read to you?”

27 And he answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.” 28 And

He said to him, “You have answered correctly; do this and you will live.” 29 But wishing to justify himself, he said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

The story of the Good Samaritan follows and you probably know it, but you may not know the context. A traveler was severely beaten and left along the road, alone, half dead. The first to come along was a priest, who crossed to the other side. The second was a Levite, of the priestly class, who did likewise. The third was a Samaritan, who at the time of Jesus was a half-breed outcaste despised by the Jews, and he took care of him. Jesus ends the story by asking the lawyer, “36 Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell into the robbers’ hands?” 37 And he said, “The one who showed mercy toward him.” Then Jesus said to him, “Go and do the same.” Matt 10:36, 37.

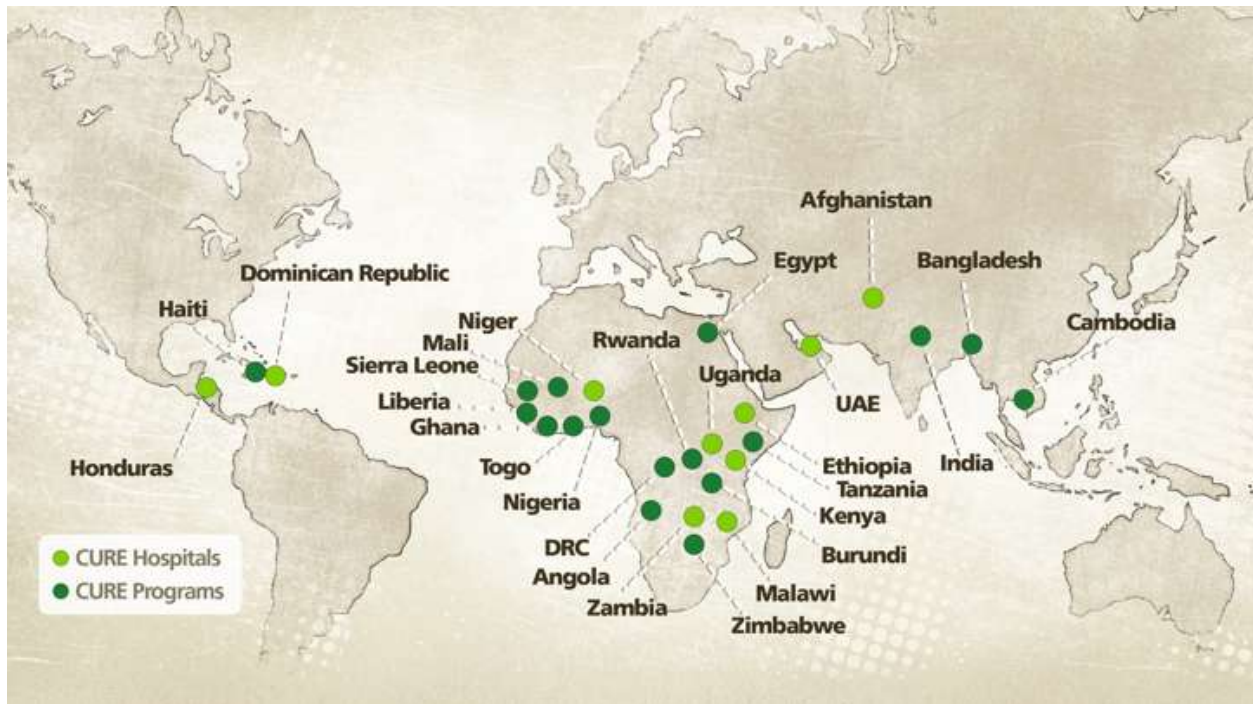
What does it mean to love your neighbor as yourself?

I recently heard what I consider to be the most dramatic description of what this means. It means to tear your skin off your body and to wrap it around your neighbor to the point where his hopes and dreams become your hopes and dreams. Think about it. We are not commanded just to love our neighbors, but to love them as ourselves. That is really quite different. We have hopes and dreams. We have expectations and hope for the future. Our dreams cost us, sometimes dearly. To love our neighbors as ourselves we must incorporate their dreams into our dreams, and that costs us something too.

History of CURE International

Cure international formally began in 1996 as the brainchild of Scott and Sally Harrison, but was the culmination of decades of more limited expression of their core beliefs of Loving God with all their heart, mind and soul and their neighbors as themselves. The concept of CURE from its inception was to take first world medicine to some of the most disadvantaged and forgotten people in the world, crippled children. There are an estimated 100 million crippled children in the world, many of whom can be cured, or dramatically alleviated of their disability with treatments that are known, proven and widely available in the developed world but unknown and/or unavailable in the under-developed world. The goal of CURE was to bring known techniques to them and to teach medical professionals in these countries these techniques so they could be spread and administered within each country by local nationals. From the outset, CURE also recognized that humans are not just a body, but also a soul and so side by side with the physical healing there was a spiritual recognition and a spiritual ministry.

The first hospital was opened in Kijabe, Kenya in 1998. Fifteen years later CURE is a network of 10 hospitals in 10 countries, seeing over 100,000 outpatient visits a year and performing over 17,000 surgical procedures each year. Just as important, Cure has trained over 8,000 healthcare professionals from the local talent including 9 orthopedic surgeons and many nurses, physical therapists, occupational therapists, brace makers, OR assistants, anesthesiologists, and laboratory assistants and hospital administrators. Several of the CURE hospitals are currently completely staffed by locally trained personnel. Seven of the 10 CURE hospitals are in Muslim majority countries.



World wide locations of CURE Programs

Although CURE hospitals treat mainly crippled children, the hospital in Al Ain is a general hospital, the hospital in Afghanistan treats mostly women, the hospital in Uganda is a neurosurgical specialty hospital treating hydrocephalus and other neurological disorders. Throughout the entire CURE network our mantra is “Healing Changes Everything” The image below is just one example of the 17,000 surgeries done last year to demonstrate that point



Before

After

CURE Clubfoot Program Worldwide

In the US the incidence of clubfoot is 1:1,000 live births. There are some country variations with the incidence in the South Pacific islands being as high as 7:1,000. No population group or people group is immune. World wide one out of every 750 children are born with clubfoot. If recognized and treated at birth or in the first few weeks of life, simple non-surgical inexpensive

treatment can completely cure the ‘disease’ of clubfoot deformity and lead to a normal life. Left untreated the deformity becomes a life-long disability. The CURE Clubfoot Program seeks to eliminate the disease of clubfoot deformity through early diagnosis and treatment. The program is based on educating local health care workers in early detection and non-operative treatment in infancy. The program only started in 2009, but already 34,000+ children have been cured of the disease of club foot. The images below show, first the consequences of no treatment, and next the result of a treatment started in infancy for an average cost of less than \$200.

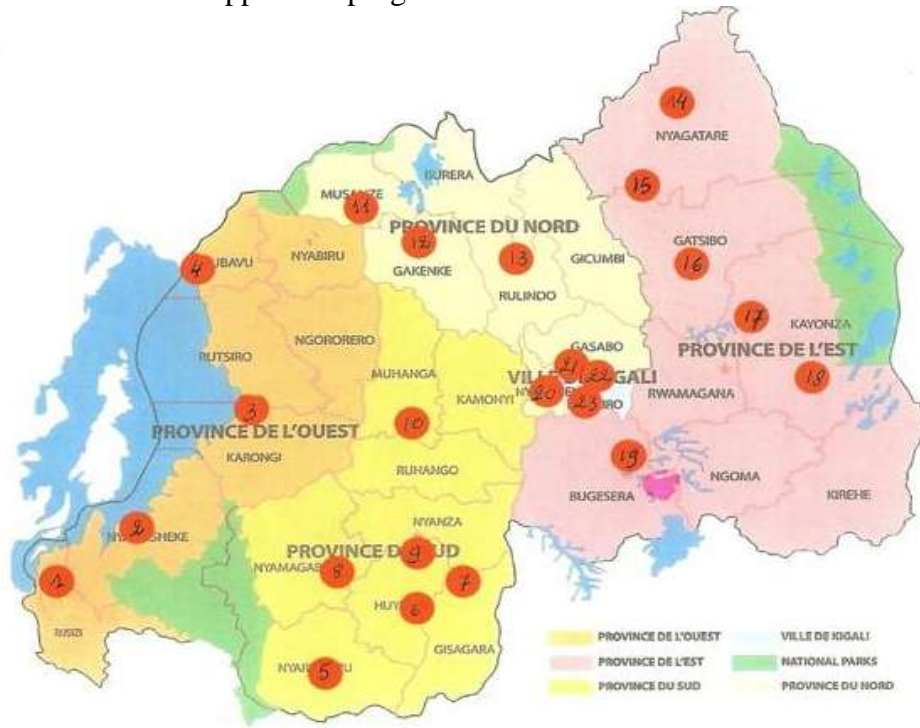


untreated club foot



Healing changes everything

The vision of CURE Clubfoot is to eradicate clubfoot in the developing world by working in partnership with number of other international NGO's, the donor community, and in-country partners to establish countrywide clubfoot treatment programs in the 100 largest developing countries over the next ten years. On the surface this might seem like an insurmountable task, but is it really? It has already been eliminated in the developed world. You could walk the streets of America or Europe and never see a person with clubfoot, and yet the incidence is still 1/1,000 live births. Our example of what is possible is in Rwanda. The program in Rwanda started only 4 years ago, but we now estimate that 85% of all clubfeet in Rwanda are identified and treated from birth or early infancy. That kind of success is possible in any country in which the resources to support the program are available. We know how to do it, and it works.



Cure Clubfoot Program in Rwanda

**Cure Oasis Hospital
An Example of a Christian/Muslim Partnership**

Oasis Hospital was founded in 1960 in the city of Al Ain in the United Arab Emirates at the invitation of then ruler, Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan al Nahyan. HH Sheikh Zayed went on to found the United Arab Emirates in 1971, and served as the President of the UAE and the Ruler of the Emirate of Abu Dhabi until his passing in 2004.

Sheikh Zayed visited Christian mission hospitals in Bahrain and in Muscat, and after seeing the care provided at both of these facilities invited Pat and Marian Kennedy to come serve his people in Al Ain. Prior to the arrival of Drs. Pat and Marian Kennedy the population of Al Ain was in decline, with net negative birth rates and high maternal death rates during pregnancy. Coming as Christian missionaries, the Kennedys eventually expressed their desire for a place of worship, and Sheikh Zayed gave them a church, which still exists on the hospital grounds today and is used by the Christian community here.

Management of Oasis Hospital was taken over by CURE in 2006 at the invitation of its founding organization, TEAM. CURE Oasis today serves between 12-15,000 patients monthly. CURE Oasis is an openly Christian hospital, with our mission statement, "To provide an international standard of quality care while representing the love and compassion of Jesus Christ", displayed throughout our hospital. We strive to offer the best medical care possible, while treating people with the love and compassion we have experienced in God showing His love for us through Jesus.

In practice, this is seen in our patient population. We are known to be a ‘missionary’ hospital by local Emiratis and Omanis, and people in Al Ain and the surrounding communities continue to make CURE Oasis their choice for their healthcare needs. In the for-profit environment of healthcare in the UAE, we are one of only three charity hospitals in the country; we are known for accepting patients with little or no insurance when other hospitals turn them away, and the vast majority of these patients are laborers from South Asia who are Muslims.

CURE Oasis is currently building a state of the art facility on its present campus. This building has been donated to CURE Oasis by HH Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed al Nahyan, in honor of his father, Sheikh Zayed al Nahyan. Through our community relations here at CURE Oasis, we regularly hear of how Sheikh Mohammed chooses to highlight the work of Oasis Hospital as a place that cares for people in a special way.

Oasis enjoys a special relationship with the royal family of Abu Dhabi, and thereby a special relationship with the local population. Prior to 1960 and the founding of Oasis, there were no healthcare facilities in Al Ain; many of the royal family and current rulers of Abu Dhabi were born at Oasis Hospital. Oasis has a special room dedicated to its relationship with the rulers of the UAE called a ‘majlis’, where we display photographs showing the history of Oasis Hospital from its founding in 1960 through to the present day. Caring and mutually respectful relationships were the foundation of Oasis in its beginnings, and continue to be so today, with Oasis Hospital partnering with the local Emirati medical school and other health and science colleges to work towards providing the best healthcare possible to the people of the UAE.

Providing excellent healthcare with the love and compassion of Jesus Christ continues to be the way we show the local community who we believe God wants us to be.

Occasionally we are challenged by some regarding our boldness and openness with our faith; the UAE is a Muslim country, and some of its residents want to encourage us to act in a way that they consider more respectful towards Islam. We gently offer that Oasis was begun at the invitation of the founder of the UAE, HH Sheikh Zayed, and continues to enjoy broad support from the rulers of Abu Dhabi, as evidenced by the gift of HH Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed. Indeed we believe it is because we are able to openly define ourselves as Christians, and at the same time lovingly care for peoples of all faiths who come to our facility, that we enjoy such broad community and government support. We allow Christian principles to guide our decision making and use this framework to determine our goals, and then strive to meet the highest standard possible both in the level of care we provide and the way in which we provide that care. Following in the tradition of CURE International, we work with all people regardless of faith or nationality. Oasis has worked with the Red Crescent in helping to bring Muslim children from countries abroad where CURE doesn’t currently have a facility and quality healthcare is unavailable. We continue to explore opportunities to bring healing to children in places as diverse as Somalia, Kurdistan, Yemen, and other countries in the region. Indeed, CURE Oasis recognizes that the people of the UAE today enjoy access to world-class healthcare, and desire the same for other people in the region. With the full support of the people, government, and royal family of the UAE, we continue to strive to find ways to provide healing to all peoples of the region, providing compassionate care, motivated by our love for our neighbor, as specifically drawn attention to by Jesus in the Bible, and in the Qur’an, to those in need in the broader Gulf and Middle East region.

Conclusion

We show the love of the One True God, and our love of our neighbor, when we do for the least of those among us what they cannot do for themselves. Disabled children are a prime examples of those who cannot do for themselves. Too often they are hidden away and treated as an object of shame, even though we know that they have been created by God. There was a time when we didn’t know how to heal them, but that time is now over. We do know how to heal them and heal them we must. In so doing we show God that we love Him and we show those who are so treated and their families that God loves them, too. Healing changes everything.