

# Micah Challenge Highlights Corruption as Roadblock to Ending Poverty

A Micah Challenge paper being released today reveals a critical need for Christians to further engage with international advocacy efforts to tackle corruption as a key tool to eradicate poverty.

*Open for Service: A Case for Good Governance*, being launched on International Anti-Corruption Day, refers to evidence of corruption negatively impacting the poor in Latin America, Asia, Africa and Europe. The paper urgently appeals for transparency in government, business and the global Christian church.

The document follows discussion between development practitioners, politicians, economists and academics reflecting the views of those living in extreme poverty and proposing solutions to corruption crimes, which could prevent governments achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015. Joel Edwards, international director of Micah Challenge said: "Corruption is a like a tower block on a runway. It accounts for over a trillion dollars going missing, and is a massive barricade to the well-being of the poorest people in the world. It's difficult to define, complex in its treatment and entrenched in business and political systems.

No wonder it has gone on underground for so long. Simply, corruption kills people.”

The Rt. Rev. Dr Benjamin Kwashi, Archbishop of Jos in Central Nigeria, spoke on corruption as a global problem at Africa’s Transformation conference this year: “Compared to corruption in the West, Africa is an apprentice.”

The call for good governance comes alongside firsthand evidence on the effects of corruption on poverty released by multiple international stakeholders earlier this year.

Research in the World Bank’s *Africa Development Indicators 2010* report highlights the severe effects of “quiet corruption” such as bribery, weak regulation and poor service delivery in the health, education and agriculture sectors of Africa. In one instance more than 50 percent of drugs sold in Nigerian drugstores in the 1990s were found to be counterfeit. The study also mentions that there are as many as 91 children per primary school teacher in the Central African Republic, compared with 22 children per teacher in Mauritius, due to absenteeism.

Case studies from Peru, Cambodia and Zambia in a Tearfund report called *Corruption and Its Discontents* similarly establishes that corruption and a culture of bribery form one of the biggest barriers to

poverty  
eradication.

A female interviewee from Moyobamba, Peru, said: "I took my daughter-in-law to the hospital. She was really sick with appendicitis. She was initially taken to one hospital but then she was referred elsewhere because they needed to operate on her. When we arrived at the second hospital, the nurse who was supposed to be supervising her said to me: 'It is the end of my day and I am very busy. I cannot see to her.' I pleaded with her to take care of her, and to give her the injections that she needed. I had to take her a gift to persuade her to take proper care of her."

*Open for Service* highlights the role that churches can play in advocating for good governance in overcoming poverty. Former Director of the U.N. Millennium Campaign Salil Shetty said in the foreword: "The people in the frontend of the evangelical churches know that if public resources are managed in a transparent and accountable manner, there is nothing stopping the world from achieving the MDGs by 2015."


President of Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe and Eminent Person of the Centre for Peace Initiatives in Africa Goodwill Shana said: "The document captures the central role that governance plays in the broad agenda of poverty reduction and eradication."

This paper launch follows Micah's campaign where 60 million Christians in over 70 nations prayed for an end to extreme poverty.

This global event formed part of a growing movement mobilizing the church to play a greater part in alleviating poverty.

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# The Ultimate Guide to the Daniel Fast

 Kristen Feola | Zondervan

In January, many churches set aside time to collectively pray and fast. Many people use the Daniel Fast, a 21-day partial fast based on Daniel's experiences in the Bible. Kristen Feola's *The Ultimate Guide to the Daniel Fast* is a valuable tool that will help participants.

The book includes 21 thought-provoking devotionals for each day of the fast and more than 100 delicious, easy-to-make recipes that follow the fasting guidelines. This book takes the guesswork out of what participants can and cannot eat, which in turn will allow them more time to focus on seeking God.

To learn more, visit the author's blog at [.](#)

[Click here to purchase this book.](#)

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# Worship Devotional

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Kingsway

One of Kingsway's  
new releases for 2011 offers a unique twist to devotionals.

Worship Devotional  
includes a 2-CD compilation of some of the most popular and  
cherished worship  
songs today by artists such as Stuart Townend, Brian Houston,  
Kelly Minter,  
Matt Redman and many more. Each track is accompanied by a  
commissioned article  
that ties together the song, Scripture, prayer and action.

Throughout 2011,  
each month will have an album. This special approach to  
devotions will help  
users connect with God each day.

[Click here to purchase the January worship devotional.](#)

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## The Dream Maker

*Led by Matthew Barnett, Los Angeles' Dream Center has ✘  
developed from an idea in 1994 into a hub of more than 270  
local ministries now replicated around the world*

Joel and Gina Guzman found hope on a hilltop near downtown

Los Angeles.

This hard-working couple with seven children and one on the way were laid off within a month of each other. The size of their family made it hard to receive assistance; shelters couldn't accommodate them. At one point, Gina was even told that she and her children could get help if she would separate from her husband.

That wasn't an option.

[On Dec. 14, at 9 p.m. \(EST\) Matthew Barnett will share his approach to creative ministry and how you can make a lasting impact in your area. Sign-up below to join the call and submit your questions.](#)

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## I Am

Twentieth Century Fox Home  
Entertainment


This modern-day telling of the

Ten Commandments chronicles the lives of four different people. Set in Los Angeles, everyone's lives intersect and each person is faced with profound choices that will test their morality and faith. A mysterious stranger guides them as each person searches for answers. They discover that the way to salvation is closer than they could have imagined.

[Click here to purchase this DVD.](#)

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## 0 Holy Night

 Jackie Evancho | Integrity Music

Now that it's socially acceptable to listen to Christmas music, the perfect way to start the season is with Jackie Evancho's *0 Holy Night* CD/DVD collection. This 10-year-old soprano prodigy won the YouTube round on *America's Got Talent* and proceeded to steal the hearts of millions with her incredible voice.

Jackie's album includes seasonal favorites "0 Holy Night" and "Silent Night" as well as opera classics "Pie Jesu" (Blessed Lord Jesus) and "Panis Angelicus" (Heavenly Bread). The DVD also features her performances on the talent show, including her audition tape, as well as an interview after the finale.

[Click here to purchase this CD.](#)

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# Achor

Josh White | BEC Recordings

In 2009, Josh White took a huge leap of faith. The former lead singer for the band Telecast became a church planter and worship leader in Portland, Ore. His church, Door of Hope, is located in the Hawthorne District, a bohemian part of the city.

The songs on *Achor* were written for the church and used in its worship services. White explains that the music style reflects “the acoustic, folk music of Hawthorne. It’s a mix of folk and bluegrass in worship, almost like a Jesus movement folk worship revival.”


White’s edgy voice delivers songs with the theme of seeking an intimate relationship with Christ. “If you forget the foundation of knowing Christ personally, you can be super involved in a great cause but the gospel becomes lost. Everything comes from the foundation of knowing Christ personally; it’s about that relationship,” White said.

“This is about moving beyond just acceptance of Christ. This is about being truly moved by the cost of discipleship and holy living. The record is focused on the possibility of deep intimacy with Christ and the idea that God can still surprise us.”

[Click here to purchase his CD.](#)

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# TobyMac: Moving Pictures

 TobyMac | ForeFront Records

Music videos have long been a key to TobyMac fans' full musical experience. And now, for the first time, TobyMac's videos are available on one DVD. *TobyMac: Moving Pictures* includes videos from his four studio albums such as "Irene," "Extreme Days" and "Loose My Soul" and the brand-new video "Tonight." Bonus content includes the never-before released "Showstopper" and "City on Our Knees."

TobyMac is currently on the Winter Wonder Slam tour with Skillet. [Click here](#) for more information.

[Click here](#) to purchase the DVD.

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## Not a Fan

 Kyle Idleman | City on a Hill Productions

While preparing for his sermon one Easter, Kyle Idleman, teaching minister at Southeast Christian Church in Louisville, Ky., discovered that Jesus never wanted us to become His fans. Jesus wants only completely committed followers.

Idleman's teaching series is now available as *Not a Fan*, a small-group discipleship study. The six mini-movies tell the story of Eric

Wilson, a nominal Christian who eventually faces a life-altering experience.

With Idelman's teachings interspersed throughout, participants will be

challenged to examine their own commitment level to Jesus.

Visit to purchase this study and to watch

a video of Kyle Idleman explaining more on this topic.

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Alvarado streets, Joel felt his family should get off. They weren't familiar with the area, but Joel again sensed the way they should go. When the Guzmans walked up the hill and saw the Dream Center, they thought it was a small church outreach and hoped they could at least get another hotel voucher.

Unfortunately, at the time, the Dream Center didn't have space available for the family. Gina started crying. They didn't know what they were going to do. While browsing in a local store, Joel told his family they needed to say a quick prayer. Twenty minutes later they received a call from the Dream Center—a room had opened up.

The family has since discovered that the Dream Center is much more than they could ever have imagined. It is comprised of more than 270 outreaches that operate on a 9-acre, 360,000-square-foot facility. Open 24/7, 365 days, this center reaches more than 40,000 people each week, providing food and clothing.

The mission's influence has expanded beyond Los Angeles with a campus in New York. Plus, 85 independent centers modeled after the Dream Center have opened worldwide. In 2005, the Dream Center also opened The Movement LA, a ministry-training and discipleship school.

But the Guzmans experienced firsthand that the Dream Center is more than just a place that provides for physical needs. It's a place where dreams are made.

At the Dream Center, Gina says, you get a chance to "accomplish what you want to be." Joel adds that when everything is taken away from you, you find out what's most important in life: "We lost everything for a reason ... for God to find us. God found us."

It's only fitting that the Dream Center helps people dream again because its very existence is based on dreams both Matthew Barnett and his father, Tommy Barnett, had to reach

the hurting and lost of Los Angeles with the hope and love of Christ. Forty years ago, while Tommy ministered in Los Angeles as an 18-year-old, God put a dream in his heart for the city. Years later, when Matthew was 16, God spoke to him that he would one day be in Los Angeles. When the time came for the two men to finally realize their dreams of planting a church in the City of Angels, they had no idea it would become what it is today.

### **Not a 'Regular Church'**

In 1994, Tommy Barnett, pastor of Phoenix First Assembly, appointed his 20-year-old son Matthew as pastor of Bethel Temple in inner-city Los Angeles, the Dream Center's first location. Their plans were to simply build a "regular church." But they soon realized they weren't in a typical neighborhood.

On Matthew's first day as pastor, he heard shots being fired in front of the church. When he went outside, he saw a teenage boy sliding down the church steps. The boy died in Matthew's arms.

On another occasion, Tommy was jogging through skid row and downtown and grew discouraged by the surroundings. The smell of urine was in the air. People were lying on the street. There were men on the street corners screaming. People were sleeping in boxes.

He thought, *Lord, how are we ever going to be able to ever build a church here? They have no jobs. They have no fathers. It's anarchy in the city.*

"But as I ran through the city," he says, "God spoke to my heart that if we would reach people nobody else wanted because they had nothing to offer, that God would give us people everybody wanted."

Matthew began doing just that. With support from Phoenix First Assembly, he bought a house in the neighborhood to help drug addicts recover. As soon as they opened the first house, they needed a second and a third. Eventually, they owned 16 houses.

Soon it became apparent that the people needed to get away from the drugs, pimps and alcohol. "It was easy to get people saved. We could have altar calls of 200 or 300, but we lost them all," Tommy explains. "We decided the only way we were going to keep them was to get a place and disciple them for at least a year."

The church needed a facility where they could offer a residential discipleship program. One day, as Matthew drove along the Hollywood freeway, he saw the old Queen of Angels hospital for sale. When he stopped to make an offer, the sales agents basically laughed at him and kicked him out of the office. Paramount Studios was buying the property for \$16 million—why in the world would they sell it to him?

But when Matthew met with the sisters of the Catholic Church, who owned the building, they sold it to him for \$3.9 million. And once again, God provided the finances for the purchase.

It's a common theme in both the Barnett and the Dream Center's storylines. Matthew believes that when you're meeting the needs of the people, God opens one door after another. "Personal dreams may fall on the wayside, but everything that is connected to the heart of God—feeding people, taking the families that are homeless, runaways—God has always supplied for."

Amid the economic recession, the Dream Center has not only been able to sustain ministry, but even expand. Matthew says they've added 200 residential spaces "because God said this is the moment to do the biggest thing you've ever done before."

## What a Difference a Dream Center Makes

The Dream Center ministers to people by meeting practical needs. But it also exists to inspire people to dream. In his new book, *The Cause Within You: Finding the One Great Thing You Were Created to Do in This World*, Matthew shares that God has a specific plan for each person. And on the ministry campus, he and his leaders create an atmosphere that helps people change and find purpose for their lives.

This is certainly true for Kory Barmore, who joined a gang in Phoenix when he was only 12 years old. After 17 years of "being a menace to society," Kory says he was essentially down to two choices: kill or be killed. He told his mother that if he didn't get out of Arizona he'd end up in jail or worse, dead.

Through family friends, Kory learned of the Dream Center. Reluctantly, he decided to go for 30 days. He's been there two years.

"God just started touching me and healing me and showing me stuff. I just stuck it out. ... The craziest part was I hadn't planned on changing."

Matthew was instrumental in Kory's new outlook on life. When he first arrived at the Dream Center, Kory heard Matthew's constant encouragement and wondered why someone would keep lifting up people like him. But he soon decided that if Matthew believed in him, then he needed to as well.

"I began to believe ... 'I am somebody. I am somebody special. I do have a brighter future,'" Kory says. "It made me start speaking life instead of death."

Matthew possesses a unique ability to challenge people to a higher standard yet simultaneously give them a sense that they are accepted, even before they get saved. He says that the church has long had the attitude "when you believe what we

believe, then we'll let you belong."

But Matthew explains the example Jesus set. When He called the fishermen to follow Him, He didn't give the men a doctrine or 10-point plan. Jesus just called them and they came. As He taught them, rebuked them and sharpened them, they grew. But first of all, Matthew says, "He let them belong and then believe."

"That's the model by which we live: You belong first but then believe. If you're a crack head you belong here more than anybody else. If you're a prostitute ... you belong here."

### **Earning Street Cred**

For Matthew, however, it took a while to "belong" in downtown Los Angeles. For the first few years, people in the neighborhood called him names and questioned his motives. They fully expected him to leave the inner city, he says. But he eventually earned respect on the streets. And now, 16 years later, he's such a fixture in the community that he even plays softball with gang members in the neighborhood.

"Whoever stays longer in the community will win the battle for influence on the kids," he explains. "Liquor stores have come and gone now. Gang members have been locked up and gone to prison. But we've still been here."

In an urban community, Matthew says credibility isn't based only on having outreaches that meet people's physical needs; it's earned by how long you stay consistent in that mission.

The Dream Center and Matthew have certainly remained faithful and made a noticeable difference in the neighborhood. When crime dropped in the area, a police officer told Matthew, "You've changed the atmosphere of the community. ... The peer pressure in the neighborhood is to do right now instead of doing wrong."

As further proof of the the ministry's respect on the streets, the hospital building on campus is the only building that never gets tagged with graffiti.

"The gang members respect us because we pay for their mothers' funerals," Matthew says. "We take care of their mothers and their gang members when they die; we cover their funerals and help them. We've earned the right to be heard in the neighborhood."

It's also the ministry's nontraditional approach that makes it so effective, says pastor Chris Hodges, whose Church of the Highlands started a Dream Center in Birmingham, Ala., in 2008. "The traditional approach to meeting need was write the check, send the food and then go back to your church, your home, your neighborhood," Hodges says. "But Dream Centers live among the people, sleep there, work with them, disciple them. So no longer is it an outreach, it's an 'inreach.' It is *your* neighborhood."

### **Like Father, Like Son**

Both Tommy and Matthew travel, speaking to raise support to keep the Dream Center operating. But what's most compelling about this father-son ministry power team is their real-life portrayal of John 5:19. Jesus said, "I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner" (NKJV).

God gave Matthew a dream for his own life, but he's approached ministry in a manner like his father. At Phoenix First Assembly, Matthew saw Tommy reach out to those nobody else wanted. He recalls when his dad sadly watched hundreds walk out of a meeting because they didn't want to go to a church that brought in dangerous people from the streets. "I've seen him fight for those types of people for years," Matthew says. "He laid that foundation so deep in my heart."

That foundation is also what the Dream Center is built upon.

Tommy often says: “Find a need and meet it. Find a hurt and heal it.” And that’s exactly what Matthew Barnett aims to do every day.

“I don’t feel like I’m a pastor of this city. I feel like I’m a city janitor just walking through the streets picking up broken pieces and telling people they can dream again. That’s why I feel like I am here.”

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**Leigh DeVore** is assistant editor for *Charisma*.

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**To see how the Dream Center is transforming lives and to hear testimonies, go to *dreams*.**

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