



Episode 13: The Canadian Church and Global Poverty Show Notes

Melissa Giles is a Training Manager at Food for the Hungry Canada. She runs Poverty Revolution Bootcamps that help churches and individuals understand how to work with the poor in ways that give dignity, respect and empowerment. Melissa started her career as a teacher and then went on to work with Samaritan's Purse, serving in Canada, Africa and Haiti. She has also worked in refugee resettlement in Lower Mainland, BC.

Tell us a little bit about you and how you came to be passionate about the poor and sharing God's love with them.

- Things changed for me during my 6 month internship with Samaritan's Purse in Uganda. Before that I was naïve about what was going on in the world in regards to poverty.
- There was a point in my life where one day after church, I went up to a high spot above the village and started reading my Bible and I read Isaiah 1:17. "Learn to do right. Seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless and plead the case of the widow." It hit me really hard that this is God's heart and this is what he asks of us. It made a strong impression on me.
- I've been learning about what it looks like to live that out.
- An internship can be a very powerful experience. It's enough time to take you out of your comfort zone and begin to ask yourself questions about your values and worldview.

You work for Food for the Hungry Canada. What does this organization do?

- It is part of a larger, global organization. FH Canada is an affiliate. It involves a global service centre in the US, several affiliate offices and national offices around the world.
- Food for the Hungry is a Christian non-profit organization dedicated to ending poverty - one community at a time. With partners like you, FH walks alongside the most vulnerable communities throughout the developing world as they strive toward sustainability. Recognizing that each community faces unique challenges as well as advantages, FH is committed to an integrated,



holistic approach to development including priorities such as agriculture, education, health, and gender equality.

The tag line for FH Canada is, “Ending poverty one community at a time.” Why focus on communities and how do they relate to poverty?

- We talk about child-focused community transformation. FH works to transform impoverished communities into safe and healthy places for children to grow.
- We focus on four interventions:
 - Education
 - Health
 - Livelihood
 - Disaster and risk reduction
- Threaded throughout these interventions is a Biblical worldview. We want to help them understand their value and that they are loved and are meant to thrive.
- We work with churches, leaders and families at a community level.
- Originally the organization started by responding to a food security crisis in Southeast Asia.

Can you tell us more about Partnership Groups?

- Our goal is to walk alongside communities over an 8-10 year period of time. During that time, we invite people from the Global North to partnership with a community in the Global South.
- Our desired goal is mutual transformation. We want both groups to be changed through the experience.
- It is a great way for the Global North to see God at work. It brings honour to God and both parties are being blessed and transformed.
- There is no quick fix to poverty alleviation. WE spend the first 2 years just listening to community members to discover the barriers that prevent people from flourishing. We are committed to a long-term relationship to equip churches, work with leaders and help families.

Could you share with us a story that illustrates how these partnerships are bearing fruit?

- There is a church from North Vancouver that has a community partnership in Uganda.
- We are seeing people in this church who have come around this clear idea of walking alongside another community. It has become a central focus in their church.
- They’ve sent multiple teams to visit their community and community members have come to BC to share with the church.



- God has really transformed their view and they see the community that they were supposed to be 'helping' and see how this relationship has also impacted them.
- At the end of the 8-10 years we have a graduation ceremony to celebrate what the community has accomplished and so people from this church in BC were able to go and be a part of the celebration.
- After their community graduated, they've taken on another partnership with another community nearby.

Do churches apply or how to churches become involved in partnerships?

- www.fhcanada.org
- On our website, you can find out about partnerships and learn how to be involved.

Does a church need to be of a certain size to participate in partnerships with FH Canada?

- We encourage partners to take the boot camp as a first step in partnering with a church in the Global South.
- A church then goes on a vision trip.
- We work with all sizes of churches. There is no minimum required size of church.

Tell us about Poverty Revolution Bootcamps.

- Education has always been a key part of what FH Canada does, both in North America and at the field level.
- These boot camps are an interactive way to learn about poverty.
- We look at poverty through a Biblical worldview. We come in as facilitators, not experts. We have people work in small groups, encourage dialogue and encourage people to unpack what the Bible says about poverty together.

What is the impact of these boot camps?

- We run 15-20 events a year.
- We're hearing a huge appreciation from churches for what we're bringing.
- There have been many 'ah ha' moments in how people are seeing the world and seeing global poverty. It's impacting people on a personal level
- Collectively, it connects people within a community that are similarly interested in poverty alleviation, creating networks of people in communities.

What kind of fruit have you seen from the boot camps?



- It's been transformative for myself as a facilitator. I always had a hard time communicating what I experienced during my years overseas. Through these boot camps I've been better able to share that experience with people.
- I receive emails from people many months after attending the boot camp, thanking us for help them to change how they see the world and poverty.
- One young man named Luke went on a church partnerships trip. He came to boot camp before leaving and was rather quiet. However, after boot camp and the trip, he wrote to tell me about the change he experienced through the boot camp and the trip to visit their partner community. He was so convicted about what was happening globally that he felt that he couldn't come back to his North American home and not begin addressing poverty in his own community and so he got involved in helping at a local shelter.
- For me, this is a powerful example of the local and global impact that the boot camps are having.

How might a church host a boot camp?

- **Email:** education@fhcanada.org
- **Call:** 1-800-667-0605 – ask for Melissa
- **Check out the website:** fhcanada.org/bootcamp

If our listeners want to learn more, how can they get in touch with you?

- **Visit our website:** www.fhcanada.org
- **Follow us on Twitter:** @fhcanada
- **Blog:** blog.fhcanada.org

