



Servant's Corner

March 2015

Successfully Measuring Success

By Rich Henderson, Love INC Director

How we measure success in our efforts to help people in need has a huge effect on the final results. For instance, a church might say, “We want to feed people who are hungry.” Given that goal, success would be measured by the number of hungry people fed. With that as a metric for success, they would look for more and more hungry people to feed more and more often. Taking this to its logical conclusion, **ultimate** success would be achieved when every person on the planet receives every meal from that church.

I have seen efforts to feed the hungry take that trajectory, especially when the government is the source. Politicians increase their voting base by seeking to expand the number of people receiving food. Since the funding for the program and livelihood of those employed in the effort depends on increasing numbers, “outreaches” are conducted to try to get more people enrolled. Ads are created to reduce the stigma of receiving food aid. The end result is an ever increasing culture of dependency.

How could a goal that sounds so laudable have such disastrous results? For starters, to be in line with the Bible, the goal needs to be modified. Proverbs 16:26 says, “*A worker's appetite works for him, for his hunger urges him on*”. In this case, feeding him takes away his incentive to work and robs him of the healthy self-esteem that comes from it. A better goal would be, “To alleviate hunger through feeding **where appropriate AND** by helping people **gain the skills needed to be able to feed themselves.**” Given this goal, success might be measured by a **decrease** in the number of people being fed by a food program.



Servant's Corner

March 2015

Successfully Measuring Success

By Rich Henderson, Love INC Director

How we measure success in our efforts to help people in need has a huge effect on the final results. For instance, a church might say, “We want to feed people who are hungry.” Given that goal, success would be measured by the number of hungry people fed. With that as a metric for success, they would look for more and more hungry people to feed more and more often. Taking this to its logical conclusion, **ultimate** success would be achieved when every person on the planet receives every meal from that church.

I have seen efforts to feed the hungry take that trajectory, especially when the government is the source. Politicians increase their voting base by seeking to expand the number of people receiving food. Since the funding for the program and livelihood of those employed in the effort depends on increasing numbers, “outreaches” are conducted to try to get more people enrolled. Ads are created to reduce the stigma of receiving food aid. The end result is an ever increasing culture of dependency.

How could a goal that sounds so laudable have such disastrous results? For starters, to be in line with the Bible, the goal needs to be modified. Proverbs 16:26 says, “*A worker's appetite works for him, for his hunger urges him on*”. In this case, feeding him takes away his incentive to work and robs him of the healthy self-esteem that comes from it. A better goal would be, “To alleviate hunger through feeding **where appropriate AND** by helping people **gain the skills needed to be able to feed themselves.**” Given this goal, success might be measured by a **decrease** in the number of people being fed by a food program.