
“Spiritual Metrics as a Bulwark Against Secularization:” Responses and Dialogue

David Bronkema, Jayakumar Christian, James Waters, Katie Toop, Subodh Kumar, and Victor Cortez

Almost a year and a half ago, on May 4, 2023, the Accord Research Alliance (ARA) community of practice of the Accord Network organized a virtual symposium to discuss David Bronkema’s “Spiritual Metrics as a Bulwark Against Secularization: Reflections on Jayakumar Christian’s Words at the ARA on “Slicing Off” the Spiritual.” The purpose of the symposium, and of Bronkema’s thought piece that underpinned it (and published as part of this issue of the journal), was to tackle the critique advanced by Jayakumar Christian in the ARA pre-conference intensive of October 2022 on the danger of engaging in spiritual metrics in a way that separated out the spiritual from everything else. The symposium was moderated by Peter Howard of the Accord Network. The first part consisted of introductory remarks by David Bronkema (a professor at Eastern University) and responses to Bronkema’s paper by Jayakumar Christian (former National Director, World Vision India), James Waters (founder and director Kingdom Impact, Ltd.), Katie Toop (senior director of transformational development at World Concern), Subodh Kumar (vice president of mission impact for Food for the Hungry), and Victor Cortez (regional director for Latin America at Water Mission). This was followed by a discussion in which David Bronkema and Jayakumar Christian responded to the comments that had been proffered, after which the respondents were given the opportunity to add their own observations to the discussion. Below is an edited version of the remarks at the symposium. The full recording of the symposium can be found at <https://vimeo.com/823841424>.

David Bronkema

Thanks, Pete and thanks, Jayakumar, James, Katie, Subodh, and Victor for all the time and effort you’ve put into preparing for this symposium, and welcome to everyone who is with us today.

I trust that everybody has had a chance to look through the “thought piece” (Bronkema 2024) you received with the link to this webinar in response to Jayakumar’s caution at the ARA intensive of October 2022 against slicing off the spiritual and trying to measure it. What I am going to do with these brief introductory remarks is to simply summarize the main arguments in it. Please feel free to refer to it for more details around those arguments.

Before I do that, however, it might be useful to frame this discussion with a bit of context, at least from my perspective. It has been twelve years now since we convened the Spiritual Metrics conference in 2011. At that time, it was not unusual for Christian philanthropic organizations and other donors, as well as Christian

relief, development, and advocacy organizations, to think of conversions as their spiritual metric default option. I certainly want to continue to uphold the fundamental importance of evangelism understood as leading people to professing Christ as their Lord and Savior, and I can’t make that point strongly enough. But seeing conversions as the sole metric or even the most important metric is neither biblically nor theologically sound; in fact, it tends to be quite counterproductive, as Dallas Willard and others have pointed out for quite some time. Thankfully, I think it is fair to say that there has been a sea change in that respect over these last twelve years, due to the faithful, prayerful, and discerning work of so many of you participating in this event today; in fact, this conversation is one indication of that change, and it is so exciting to see. At the same time, we are still in the beginning stages of puzzling through this area of measuring spiritual impact; the struggle of how best to go about planning for and assessing spiritual growth and maturity is very much alive, with all kinds of uncertainty; as a result, there

continues to be important work ahead of us in many different dimensions of this endeavor.

Let us now turn to the issue at hand, which has to do with Jayakumar's caution against "slicing off the spiritual" from everything else and trying to measure it. He fears doing so leads us into propagating a worldview and an approach that see and treat the spiritual as something separate from everything else. In essence, the main question Jayakumar poses for us on a practical level is this, How does one ensure that measuring spiritual impact and engaging in spiritual metrics promote our understanding, and that of the people we work with, of seeing God and God's design, purpose, and calling in everything, and that we think, talk, plan, and act accordingly?

The thought piece you received attempts to answer that question, with the following points. First, there are four main relationships we need to pay attention to; our relationship with the triune God, and our relationships with ourselves, each other, and creation. The problem that Jayakumar alerts us to is that in our relationships with ourselves, others, and creation, in those areas labeled as mental health, economics, politics, and the environment, for example, the world encourages us to push God out of the picture, to secularize things, to slice off the spiritual dimension and allocate it only to our relationship with God, to the "religious" realm. The questions become how do we prevent such secularization from happening in our programs?, and how do we protect and deepen their spiritual dimensions?

This is where spiritual metrics, if done well, show their true value; they can act as a bulwark against secularization and provide a way to plan for, implement appropriate programs, and assess spiritual growth and maturity. But to do this well, the process of measuring spiritual impact needs to start with the planning phase rather than the measurement phase, and in most instances such planning is best carried out as a highly participatory endeavor with our staff and the people we work with. There are two reasons for this: First, broad participation forces everyone involved in planning, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating to wrestle with exactly how what we are doing is spiritual, thereby deepening the awareness and understanding of the presence of God in all that we are doing. Second, it requires us to think, discuss, and pray about what increasing levels of spiritual maturity might look like, how best to pursue those outcomes, and what the evidence might look like as part and parcel of our programs and projects. This is why I tend to be cautious about using universal spiritual outcome indicators, even though they can be a valuable part of the discernment discussion. Not only do universal indicators generally not fit the particular contextual needs, they also truncate

the collective organizational and participatory process of discussing how the spiritual is and should be manifested in that particular context and calling. This process in and of itself creates the bulwark against secularization that Jayakumar is so concerned about.

I will stop here and am very interested to hear what Jayakumar and others have to say.

Jayakumar Christian

I enjoyed reading David's reflections and the way he framed his question about spiritual metrics and secularization. We have been looking at how David uses spiritual metrics as a bulwark against secularization. I would like to push it a little further and say that spiritual metrics should not simply be a defense for us but position us to aggressively challenge secularization. I suggest this be the purpose of our work in framing "spiritual metrics."

I fully agree with David's comment that before we talk about metrics, it is important for us to start right at the beginning with the planning. The challenge before faith actors that David refers to in his paper is the tendency to slice off the spiritual, reflecting a dualistic understanding between the spiritual and the secular. In the process we tend to push God out of the picture—despiritualization. These are frames and labels that David uses in his paper.

I would like to add a few thoughts for our consideration.

The secular ideologies that govern much of our humanitarian industry seeks to marginalize and isolate the spiritual and branding faith of Christians as being irrelevant, discriminatory, and irrational. We are constantly being pushed to defend ourselves. It is important for us to take an aggressive stance rather than simply a defensive stance. The "spiritual," borrowing from the definition in David's paper, is the existence of and the possibility of a relationship with the divine, which the Christian faith defines as a relationship with the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and the consequent belief that all things come under the purview of the divine and of the Christian faith. We refer to this as our continued growing understanding of the Kingdom of God and the lordship of Christ. This is our operational definition of what "the spiritual" means for our conversation.

There are four myths to be conscious of as we develop our spiritual metrics. First, the need to take care that we do not assume "spiritual" is simply about religion. There is an underlying "spirituality" in all domains of relationships including structures, systems, institutions, and processes. This tendency to relegate spiritual only to the realm of "religion" is often a Western problem. The second myth is the secular/sacred divide. Strangely, the ones who really

practice the wholism that we preach about are non-Christian cultures. It is so seamless with them. They do not compartmentalize their lives. Third, we are not simply measuring what we define as spiritual aspects of our program. We use spiritual metrics to measure the whole. The fourth myth is that wholism is about quality of well-being and not quantity. We often confuse wholistic with being comprehensive. Wholism is not about the parts, but the whole.

The two bookends of our exercise on developing these metrics to measure wholism should be embedded first, like David says, in our planning: in our understanding of the root causes of poverty, marginalization, oppression, fragile states, etc. Second, we need to ensure our growing and common understanding of the kingdom of God, and must mold our definitions of impact and influence to it.

The root causes of poverty are embedded in various domains of relationships, and they could be social, political, bureaucratic, religious, and economic domains. It is important that we understand these broken relationships in the context of the personal/community, micro/macro, and global levels with all its ramifications in the systemic, structural, institutional and process dimensions.

The structures, systems, institutions, and people are held together by an “ideology” – the worldview of structure, people, and systems. It is important that we address the ideology that holds these together. It is not enough simply to address structures, people, and systems. Borrowing from Walter Wink – in his book *Engaging the Powers*, he calls this ideology the “spiritual interiority.” For sustainable, wholistic impact it is important to address this “spiritual interiority” – the world view that holds structures, systems institutions, and processes that marginalize the poor, together. It is not enough simply to rearrange structures, people, and systems. Our spiritual metrics must also measure the impact of our work on these “ideologies-spiritual interiority–worldview.” Our advocacy must challenge these ideologies that do not recognize the existence of God.

Finally, developing spiritual metrics must be a “whole organization” responsibility. It is important to embed organizational understanding of the root causes of poverty, including flawed spirituality and the kingdom of understanding of impact, into at least two aspects of the life of an organization—first in the organization’s theory of change, and second in the ethos of the organization.

James Waters

In response to David’s paper, essentially I agree with the theological foundations, and I love that he says “spiritual metrics helps us to graft the spiritual

dimensions back into situations where they are absent and nurture and deepen those spiritual dimensions where they are already present” (Bronkema 2024). What I advocate for is that we definitely should not slice off, but, to use an analogy that might fit, we should actually bake in certain ingredients that you cannot taste elsewhere. We should be able to slice, but not slice off, because there is a tension here – yes, everything is spiritual, but there should be something “salty” about what we are doing, something distinctive. We should be pushing back against dualism, but there should also be something distinctive about our work. I also believe that measuring the spiritual dimensions will affect the rest. Therefore, it is not about slicing off, but, as Jayakumar said, about acknowledging that the spiritual is a critical part of the whole.

It is about having a holistic and rounded definition of well-being or thriving, which may be our ultimate goal. Here are some quick examples to make this point: International Care Ministries (ICM) has managed to capture health and livelihood outcomes and analyze those alongside spiritual outcomes. Compassion International is doing some great work to validate “growth in Christ” metrics. And while David says that the world encourages us to push God out of the picture, I am actually encouraged that there are elements of the world that are not doing that and are instead acknowledging the spiritual. For example, McKinsey just included the spiritual as a critical dimension of measuring health. Harvard is including the spiritual when they think about a definition of human flourishing. Currently, I am engaging with two secular impact platforms that embed well-being, holistic well-being, and are interested to include , including spiritual metrics, in what they are doing as a global reach. I would actually argue that the world is asking for and acknowledging this [an articulation of spiritual well-being], and will get to it if we don't get there first. That is why our Kingdom Impact Framework (KIF) survey measures these three relationships. We need this integrated approach where we are measuring one's relationship with God, self, and others, and creation.

One final thought is that only by measuring the spiritual as distinct in some way can we see the impact and influence of the Spirit at work within us. I don't think we've managed to do that well yet, but this will allow us to give glory to Christ. We should not slice this off, but there should be a slice that is part of an integrated and an overall whole.

Katie Toop

This is such a critical conversation, because I see the sacred/secular divide as a key strategy the enemy uses to keep us from the fullness and the abundance of life that God has designed us for. As Jayakumar pointed

out, this is especially evident in the Western worldview. Indeed, that is why it is so important to consider how this view is embedded in our staff. I see a large part of this as a discipleship issue, and spiritual metrics as a potential discipleship tool or discipline that, like any other tool, can be used or misused. One of the most helpful things I've heard around spiritual metrics and the sacred/secular divide was at an Accord research intensive years ago when guest speaker Michael Woolcock talked about spiritual metrics falling into this category of what he called "essentially contested concepts." These are concepts that are not easily defined, that are almost impossible to measure, but that, most importantly, do their work through the kinds of conversations they elicit. That has really stuck with me over the years.

This is part of why I agree with what David said about universal indicators in spiritual metrics being less helpful; they cut off the conversation. Spiritual metrics are a tool to keep the conversation at the forefront and centered around Christ and around what the Spirit of God is doing, and a tool to guard against separation.

This conversation brings to mind a young man on our staff in one of our creative access contexts who recently came to faith from a Buddhist background. If you asked him right now to construct a sacred/secular divide in his life, he wouldn't be able to do it. His spirit is so responsive to what God has done in his heart. His joy is so full. His love for Jesus is so permeating every conversation and every interaction that he would not be able to contain it and cordon it off into a section of his life if he tried. He reminds me very much of Mary right now when she broke the jar of perfume and anointed Jesus as an act of worship. I was looking at that story in Scripture and also at Judas's response, and wondering whether it reflects in some way this sacred/secular divide. Judas is not openly saying "don't worship Jesus," but rather something like "don't let your worship of Jesus mess with your efficiency in your ministry outcomes. There are better ways to spend this money that have a return on investment (ROI) that we'll be able to see." The challenge here is to see ourselves in Judas, who also perhaps came from a very genuine first love when he decided to follow Jesus.

In short, I see a lot of this sacred/secular divide as a discipleship issue in part, and as a question of how we can help one another in our organizations cultivate hearts that cling to our first love. How can spiritual metrics be part not only, as David said, of guarding against this divide but, as Jayakumar talked about, part of actively pursuing a growing identity as a Christ-worshipping people and doing it with humility, recognizing while we measure that we likely have very little idea of what God is really doing. We are very often wrong, as the disciples were all the way to the end. We

may still be wrong about what God is doing, but we try to discern it with faithfulness and humility.

Subodh Kumar

One of the insights Jayakumar provides is an understanding of poverty, emphasizing the impact of systems, structures, and relationships. Poverty is not simply about broken relationships. Rather, poverty is a symptomatic manifestation of broken relationships. It is a complex phenomenon that cannot just be put into metrics. One of the key reasons we are having this conversation today is predominantly around one particular phenomenon, which is the missing "why." The missing "why" has fallen victim to the "what," "how," "when," and "who." The key question for metrics is "why are we doing this?" or "what are we doing this for?" As Jayakumar said, spiritual formation or spiritual impact is not just a programmatic phenomenon but an organizational one. It is embedded into the overall theory of change, why God has called a particular organization to do what it is doing. Most of the time, spiritual formation and impact are not readily captured by simple metrics. Metrics give this connotation of linear causality. Our programs and projects are simply instruments, vehicles that God uses to establish his kingdom. If poverty is about broken relationships, then our programs should basically address and measure the restoration of these broken relationships. That is what our impact measurement should focus on. The process of doing is thus related to the purpose of doing.

Based on this, I have two thoughts to share with you today. One goes back to Jayakumar's argument that all metrics are spiritual metrics. I tend to agree with that because one thing missing in our monitoring and evaluation (M&E) world is a theological rationale. That is, we create indicators and write a developmental rationale for each particular indicator, but we forget that every metric should also have a theological rationale. As I wrote in an earlier article (Kumar 2022), in measuring impact everything should start with our theology. Our theory and its operationalization are built on theology. If our program is about broken relationships, then all our metrics should measure that. Any metrics we pick, therefore, must have a theological rationale and not just the developmental rationale. That will really help us focus on what we measure.

The second thing, referring again to my article, starts with the "why" question. A critical element we are missing in our M&E world is a hermeneutic that helps us interpret the data and connect it to spiritual measurement. That is why the theological rationale of measurement will help us understand, create a bulwark, and thus defend against and address this artificial

differentiation between spiritual and non-spiritual metrics.

Victor Cortez

Something I would like to emphasize and that helped me a lot is that we must be aware that everything we do, consciously or unconsciously, communicates a philosophy, a belief, a worldview. So, the question our organization asks us to ask ourselves is “What kind of worldview are we promoting right now with our activities and our projects?”

I agree that even before defining indicators, we must plan. But before that, we must make an assessment. We need to have the courage to recognize that, because of our fallen nature, we have been contaminated with the worldviews of the development industry, making it likely that we are promoting secular, humanistic, mechanistic, reductionist, or dualistic worldviews. My question to Jayakumar and to David is what they recommend for our organizations to evaluate our current activities and projects against a biblical worldview. How can we identify the worldviews, ideas, and beliefs we are promoting right now?

Second, talking about indicators, we must define interconnected indicators. Right now, the mechanistic and reductionist mindset forces us to measure in an isolated way. Why don't we define interconnected indicators that can help us measure the quantitative and qualitative at the same time? For instance, if we measure improved agricultural production, why don't we measure, at the same time, whether the farmers increasing their agricultural production are understanding, from the biblical perspective, their identity and vocation? We should also ask about farmers' motivations. These farmers are now improving their agricultural production because they understand that they need to provide for their families, but also to bless their neighbors, and to do this as part of God's full mandate to honor God. It is not just the “what,” but also the “who.” We, with our direct interventions, can help farmers recover that identity and vocation and understanding that what they are doing is part of the mandate they received from God.

Finally, I like the idea of how we can transfer power to the most vulnerable. We need to accept with humility that we are all in a process of mutual transformation. Therefore, we are not just agents of transformation, but also subjects of transformation. When we start a relationship with the most vulnerable communities, it is because we understand that they are poor, but we also have our own poverty. Transformation must happen in the communities, but also in our organizations and the staff of our organizations, and even in the donors. Monitoring and evaluation processes should be mutual, which is to say that communities should have the agency

to evaluate us. In this way, we need to promote two-way monitoring and evaluation.

David Bronkema

Let me pick up on what Victor just finished saying, because it ties in with a couple of things, and what Victor is saying is so important. Sometimes it seems there is a default belief that the poor are also spiritually poor and that we don't have much to learn from them on the spiritual side, which is of course problematic. That would be an aspect of the kind of worldview and the ideology that we succumb to, as Victor said; that the poor are inferior technically in terms of knowledge and other ways.

Victor also asked how to construct in each organization a process by which one evaluates and assesses how we are doing discipleship-wise in terms of our worldview and our ideology. While I have no concrete answers, I would point out that it is a contextual issue as well, a process that an organizational community needs to undertake. Just asking that question, just putting the question out there, launches the process. How best to carry that out would be up to each organization.

In terms of the definition of poverty and the focus on relationships, this might be provocative, but it may be useful to make a distinction between defining poverty and understanding poverty. Obviously, they are related, but when I look at Scripture, and I may be wrong about this, what I see is that the word “poverty” is used almost exclusively to talk about material poverty, as in “the rich” versus “the poor.” If we start there, it points us to what James was saying, that we are flesh and spirit, that there is a biological, a material element involved. While not separate from the spiritual, these biological and material aspects do have a life of their own, which is why we struggle both with the flesh and the lack of material resources. In summary, while it is useful to see the causes of poverty as rooted in broken relationships, I am not so sure it is as useful to define poverty as consisting of broken relationships, because that can lead us to ignore certain aspects of poverty that are crucial.

Finally, somebody commented in the chat that “all metrics are spiritual metrics.” I wish and hope that were the case, but I'm not so sure. I agree that everything has a spiritual dimension to it, but if we are not focusing on those spiritual dimensions and the extent to which people are aware of those or not, then I am not so sure we can say we are engaging in spiritual metrics. In other words, the way I would put it is that all our spiritual metrics should carry an intentionality around spiritual dimensions, and it seems to me that there is quite a ways to go for us to get there.

Jayakumar Christian

A few additional thoughts. First, I fully agree that understanding the root causes of poverty and the interpretation of data are important organizational disciplines. That is because we are about providing thought leadership, not simply fulfilling “a checklist.” All Christian NGOs are called to be thought leaders, because we are dealing with worldview issues, not just simple nuts and bolts. So how do we equip Christian organizations to be thought leaders if we do not invest time to interpret and understand the root causes of poverty and interpret the data that come out of our various evaluations to connect the dots?

Second, it is important that we ground our programming, advocacy, and everything else that goes with it, in our theology. Without theology, without ideology, we cannot be thought leaders, and our ideology comes from faith, which is why we refer to it as “theology.” Unfortunately, the poverty of Christian NGOs does not position us to be thought leaders, because we have not done our homework to be grounded ideologically on the theology. We don't really do due diligence on grounding our response and everything else in our ideology.

The third thing I wanted to flag is that there is no way we can pursue kingdom impact, which includes everything in its scope, without being multidimensional. That is the function of the kingdom of God. It is not the function of our metrics. Metrics that seek to measure kingdom quality impact will, of necessity, have to be multidimensional. We cannot say we are about the kingdom of God unless we agree with what David says in Psalm 24:1, “the earth is the Lord’s, and the fullness thereof” or as missiologist Abraham Kuyper says “there's no time, breadth, or space about which God doesn't say ‘that belongs to me’.” The secularization process addresses this fragmentation by giving lip service to the spiritual and slicing it off and saying it deals with religion. It might deal with a few values here and there, but it does not cover the whole. The kingdom of God challenges that assumption. The kingdom of God says our God is the God over all aspects of human life, over every relationship. Naturally, then, the metrics we develop will have to be multidimensional. There is no way we can be about the kingdom and not be multidimensional.

What is coming through is not simply how to keep bridging the spiritual and the secular. What is coming through is that the roots of that bridge might be in addressing worldview issues. It is not just doing some artificial bridging between the secular and the spiritual; the root of that fragmentation, unfortunately, is an inability to address worldview issues, and, once we acknowledge that, we can start addressing the real issue. We also need to acknowledge that we have a flawed

worldview, or that our worldview is not perfect. We ourselves are candidates for transformation, which brings integrity into our model of transformation. If Jayakumar is not transformed, there is no integrity in our model of transformation.

Finally, that last issue concerns the multi-faith context. There is no way we can enter multi-faith contexts as ones who have no bias. We do have a bias, and we need to be transparent about the bias. The Hindu poor will be suspicious of someone who claims and says, “I have no bias.” They will say, “You're not being transparent.” It is important to declare our bias, to be honest with our bias, not arrogant with our bias, to be secure with our bias, and to be out front by being servants, as the Bible says. It is important for us to recognize that it is precisely our multi-faith context that demands that Christians do not play hide-and-seek with our bias. We have a worldview. We have an ideology. We have a faith. When we play hide-and-seek with our faith issues, the Hindu poor will say, “There's much more. We need to know the whole story.”

David Bronkema

Just to jump in on that last point, certain organizations, both mission organizations as well as Christian development organizations, working in multi-faith contexts or especially in restricted area contexts, are taking some cues from what is called the “Engel scale.” Jim Engel created a scale where he said, and I am paraphrasing, that we are on a scale from complete hostility to Christ all the way up to completely submitting ourselves to Christ's lordship. What it helps us see is that when we enter restricted area contexts, the labor of missionaries is not simply to gain converts. It is also, and perhaps even more, about relationships that may eventually lead others to reap the harvest. When they leave the context, it may be that the local people from that restricted area context are now saying “Hey, these Christians are really nice people.” According to the Engel scale, they bumped up from a situation of hostility to Christians to being open to engaging in relationships with them, which then opens more doors to what Jayakumar said is so important, that we don't want to hide the fact that we are Christian and that we know that the Lord is leading us in particular ways. The Engel scale, therefore, is sometimes helpful as programs prayerfully discern and assess the change they might be able to achieve, plan the activities to achieve it, and finally assess and evaluate progress toward it in a way that helps us improve what we are doing.

James Waters

A few quick thoughts. First, I was also going to push back on “all metrics are spiritual metrics.” There is a real possibility with that kind of approach that we will

just end up going around in circles. I've proposed that there are tensions here that we need to acknowledge, just as there are tensions in the Bible that Jesus talks about as being "mysteries." One of them is present here, which is that while there needs to be something distinctive about what we are doing, at the same time it will influence everything else, that it will be multidimensional. I love the point that Jayakumar made about how we need multidimensional metrics. If we can acknowledge this as a tension, we probably won't need to be talking about this in ten years, although we probably still will be.

Second, a quick pushback around the case against universal spiritual metrics, which David put forward. (Some of this outworks in how we define "metrics" - it is important to separate outcomes, indicators, and metrics/questions.) I am obviously passionate about universal metrics, and don't think it necessarily truncates the participatory processes. I would love a follow up conversation on this to get a little bit more practical; there are quite a few comments in the chat about what these metrics actually look like. That would seem to be a next step conversation, and I would love to get into the weeds with this. The contextualization happens in the process; it happens in the planning, in the strategy, in the choosing and the adapting of metrics. If I've learned anything from other places in the world, it is that having best practices already validated and identified helps people who don't have the capacity to engage research institutions or universities and validate their own scales. [Later comment added from thinking and discussions since: For instance, you can have helpful outcomes categories of spiritual well-being that have robust theological and sociological underpinning. But you can also go through a grounded, bottom-up process to listen to local articulations of impact that shape *how* you measure those categories, and indeed if there are categories that you have missed. I don't think it has to be top-down *or* bottom-up; There can be a healthy combination of both.] I have actually proposed that kind of universal multidimensional tool. David and I both want to engage in this conversation and are proposing the creation of a learning community where these kinds of conversations can get into the types of details. It is not so much whether a tool should be universal or not, but about the application of how we make this process of spiritual metrics really possible, especially for some of the smaller organizations or the lower capacity organizations in this space.

Finally, I agree with something already said here: we found recently a huge interest in uptake in thinking about the spiritual health of organizations internally. As we think about this as leaders, staff, and organizations, it is quite a kingdom model to think about the inside-out nature of the kingdom, in this case of the

organizations. Let's think about ourselves and our cultures, and then the implications for how we go beyond that, including with donors.

Katie Toop

Yes, and amen. I do think we will be talking about it in ten years. This conversation is always going to be rich; it is always going to be part of the beauty and the mystery of seeking to discern what the Spirit of God is doing among us; and then how we celebrate, how we respond, how we worship, and how we partner with what we see the Lord doing, and how we repent.

And I love this question about multi-faith contexts. For us, this has been a place where being able to do our own spiritual metrics, our own assessment, how we are doing spiritually, has been an opportunity to share good news with those in our organizations who are not yet followers of Jesus. In part, that is where we see people choose to follow him. This process can be a beautiful and transformational discipline itself.

Subodh Kumar

I want quickly to mention few things. The first is what David also mentions in his paper, how critical the elements of designing and planning are. I also endorse what Victor said about going back to the assessment, because if our bias in assessment is towards the development side of things, then our programing will not address the spiritual aspect of the root causes.

Second, we have been working in development for years and use this deficit, linear-based approach of inputs to outputs to outcomes to impacts. As a monitoring and evaluation person, I am beginning to wonder if that linearity still works in a context of systems when we are dealing with poverty. Maybe we need an approach that helps us understand things in a different way, because these are complex relationships we are talking about. Using a systems-based approach to view things solely through a deficit lens and as a metric for understanding does not prove effective.

Victor Cortez

I will advocate for people in the community because it feels like we are looking at them first as objects of our study, and then we define what we have to know and what we have to accomplish. In our participatory system, their role is just to bring us information. I do not see efforts to help them become the ones to define things as well. Why don't we present the indicators to them and discuss with them if these are the appropriate indicators to measure in that community? We must start thinking how we can make sure the families and poorer communities have more agency in the things we define.

David Bronkema

Just a couple of quick points to help point us forward. First, many of the issues we addressed today and those in the chat have quite a bit of work that has been done around them. Please be in touch with me or Pete if you are interested in those resources. Second, Katie mentioned humility, Victor and others mentioned participation, and I so appreciate how all the presenters today are seeking the same thing, which is to follow where God is leading. There may be some differences of opinion on certain things, but as Katie said, as we work through these things, that is where the richness lies, and that is where we continue to learn from each other. Hopefully that is how we all keep ourselves humble and open to God's leading.

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