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Foreword to When Helping Works

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Foreword

MICHAEL BADRIAKI IS ABOUT to take you on an important dialogical journey simply for the cost of his book. With over twenty years of experience working in Africa, Asia, the UK, Haiti, and America, Michael Badriaki knows how to go deep into the areas vexing our own souls and consciences with a gentleness that perhaps only a person who has participated in both sides of Christian mission and international development work could accomplish.

This book will challenge the wrong stereotypes that we have created within our Christian mission systems. The idea behind the “stereotype” comes from the ancient Greek word *stereos*, which means “solid” or “firm.” *Tupos*, means an “engraved mark.” Together, they signify a “real mark” or “solid impression.” Perhaps the Greeks did not invent the idea of stereotype, but from their earliest literature and art we know they developed well the ideas of the “savage” or “barbarian” and what I refer to in the missional world as “the cultural other.” Over thousands of years, Western civilization has been upholding these myths throughout the historical realities of colonialism, slavery, racism, etc. The West has now come to realize they, indeed, are our myths. In *When Helping Works*, Michael helps us to understand where these negative stereotype threats in the church lay silent and unspoken and he assists the missional thinker in finding new paths forward.

You may notice the similarity of this title to another book of similar subject matter—this is not an accident but rather a constructive response and a better way to move forward in mission. As a sage way into the discussion, in the introduction and mainly in chapters one and two of the book, Michael provides some insights as a critique of the mind-set in Western evangelical literature on missions. Although not an entire review of their book, he argues for an alternative approach to Brian Fikkert and Steve Corbett’s book *When Helping Hurts*.

FOREWORD

This critique is necessary because of the wide-spread notoriety among churches that the book has gained and because of what it lacks. A notoriety, I might add, that is partially well-deserved, but still fails in the same manner as most Western writers do concerning missions. In Badriaki's view, the book misses the mark of majority world perspectives present in the global church and fails to take into account the need for the proper representation of those lives and cultures. Without recognizing it, many Western writers continue to promote paternalism and its effort to sentimentalize, essentialize, normalize, and glamorize the Western heroic missionary's privilege, creating again "the cultural other." Such shaping of Western evangelical's practices and understanding about doing missions in places like Africa and other parts of the world continues to encourage negative stereotype threat. What's more, the consequent outlook suffers from the invisibility of those who are not presented as problem solvers, but are rather portrayed as the problem.

In this book, Michael provides a positive and corrective perspective about the love ethic of helping neighbor, which he argues is in contrast to Fikkert and Corbett's mind-set, as it attempts to scapegoat and marginalize the art of helping, at the expense of redressing some of the core issues of identity he raises in the book.

For years, sincere, well-meaning, Western missional folks have been asking, "How do we do mission right?" If you are willing to look deep into the stereotype threats in our society and our own souls, Michael Badriaki will reveal in this book not only how to do mission right, but how to do mission well.

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