

### Case Study Part 1 - “Purpose”

#### 1.2 Missions Shift - Good Intentions Gone Wrong

We often hear the saying, “Think big, start small, build deep.” This calls for wisdom, patience, and perseverance. The reality is that it is so easy to get ahead of God and venture into something greater, faster, and grander. A lack of patience can often cause us a lot of pain and heartache. It can all end up being haste without speed.

**Ecclesiastes. 7:8** “The end of a matter is better than its beginning, and patience is better than pride.” (NIV)

**Proverbs 14:15** “The simple believe anything, but the prudent give thought to their steps.” (NIV)

**Proverbs 19:2** “It is not good for a man to be without knowledge, and he who makes haste with his feet misses his way” (RSV)

**2 Corinthians 6:14 & 15** “Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? Or what does a believer have in common with an unbeliever?” (NIV)

#### Case Study

Simon left his family business to his younger brother and answered God’s call to help the rural poor, who are mired in poverty due to the lack of education and access to capital required to start small businesses.

From his savings, Simon set aside the sum of US\$25,000 and began micro-financing the poor without collateral but with a reasonable and sustainable business idea. He capped each loan at US\$300. Over time, this venture has helped hundreds of families and lifted many out of extreme poverty. Simon visited his borrowers regularly and offered sound and practical business advice. He knew each of his borrowers.

Many families began to enjoy better health and were able to send their children to school. Simon kept the interest rate low at 5% p.a. As a close-knit community,

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the borrowers mutually encouraged one another to work hard and held one another accountable. The repayment rate was 98%.

For his good work and his personal interest in the borrowers, Simon was dearly loved and well received in the community, and people looked up to him as their “saviour”. Simon was able to speak to the lives of the villagers, and many came to know Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. A couple of churches were planted.

Good news travelled fast to the city. Simon had a banker friend, Peter, a non-believer, who suggested to Simon that with such small capital base, the community impact was too little and too slow and that he had underutilised his potential for greater good. Peter proposed to Simon to scale the business and lined up investors to meet with Simon. The investors were impressed with the 98% repayment rate and offered to fund his micro-financing with a capital of US\$10 million. The investors expected an annual return of 20% p.a.

With an enlarged capital base, Simon employed an army of 50 agents who travelled from village to village to offer micro-financing. With the increased cost of capital, Simon now needed to charge borrowers an interest rate of 25%. Still, there was no lack of takers for new loans. The micro-financing business was growing by leaps and bounds. A year and a half into the new business model, results from the field revealed the following: -

1. Interest and capital repayment in arrears for 90 days or more had escalated to a staggering 60%.
2. Some loans were not applied to finance and build new businesses but to repay other high-interest loans.
3. There were 2 reports of suicide as the debt collectors employed questionable methods.
4. Church attendance steadily fell as some villagers began to view Simon’s motives as profiteering and no better than any other loan sharks.

Simon was devastated by the news and lamented being out of touch. He comes to you for counsel and advice.

### Discussion

1. God’s purpose was central in the beginning. List what Simon did right.
2. Later, what went wrong? How come the new business model yielded such a different outcome?

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3. Should Simon continue with the business or quit? If he continues, what changes are needed to rebuild his tarnished reputation and return to the business of helping the poor and refocusing on missions?
4. What lessons can we learn from Simon?

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