

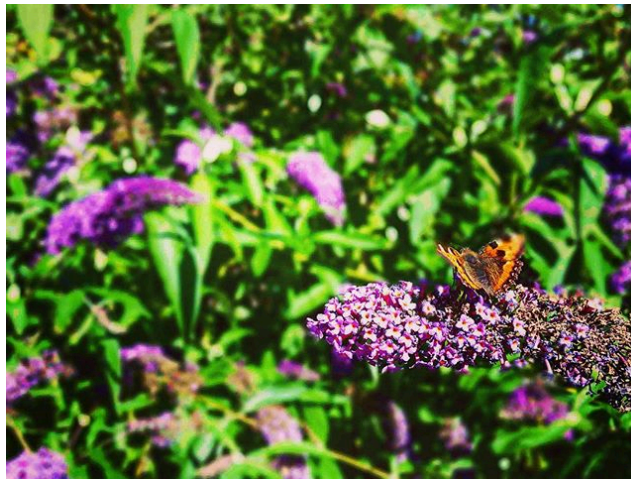


NORWEGIAN  
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

# Experience of Transformation in Drug Rehabilitation

A Christian Rehabilitation Model for Treating Drug Addiction in Vietnam

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## **ABSTRACT**

The aim of this research is to investigate how transformation is experienced and understood in the Christian drug rehabilitation program in Vietnam. The most unique feature of this program compared to other traditional programs is its emphasis on rehabilitation not by medication but rather through transformation by faith, through love and the words learnt from the Bible. I have presented theories relating to mission as transformation and chose it as the main theme of my research. In order to answer the research question and sub-questions, I collected data from interviews and participant observation in two Christian rehabilitation clinics in Vietnam. In this qualitative research, I selected twelve informants including pastors, workers and drug addicts to obtain their perspectives on the understanding and experience of transformation.

Understanding the experience of transformation in the Christian rehabilitation program shows evidence of coordination among pastors, workers and drug addicts during the rehabilitation process as well as the connection between personal and social transformation. The role of the Holy Spirit and the Kingdom of God are two key themes underlying the participants' understanding and experience of transformation. Through faith in Christ, these addicts claim to be transformed and delivered from drug addiction. Although there are no official statistics regarding the success of the program, the Vietnamese government has started to allow this type of rehabilitation model to be applied in some government rehabilitation prisons. Thus, it is clear that this rehabilitation method is a good example of mission as transformation.



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## **ABBREVIATIONS**

IMC	International Missionary Council
WCC	World Council of Churches
LWF	The Lutheran World Foundation

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1. Themes

This thesis explores the Christian concept of mission as transformation, specifically how transformation is understood and experienced in the field of drug addiction and rehabilitation. I hereby present a case study of the Christian rehabilitation program in Vietnam as the source for my exploration of how the practice of the Christian drug rehabilitation in Vietnam engage and promote transformation through its mission.

### 1.1.1. Actualization

Despite experiencing remarkable economic development since 1980s, Vietnam is still battling poverty and social vices. Drug addiction is regarded as a major problem in the Vietnamese society. Drug abuse is both the cause and consequence of poverty and other social vices such as robbery, thuggery and prostitution. According to the National Committee for AIDS, Drugs and Prostitution Prevention and Control of Vietnam, there were 204,000 drug addicts reported in September 2014<sup>1</sup>. Additionally, the drug addicts are no longer concentrated in particular geographical areas for easy control and support. Rather, they are found in almost all provinces and cities across the country. The increasing number of drug addicts and the spread of drug abuse throughout Vietnam are two main issues when dealing with drug addiction in Vietnam.

### 1.1.2. Personal interest in the Christian rehabilitation program

While studying at MF Norwegian School of Theology, I have served in a Vietnamese Baptist church led by Pastor Minh in Oslo. In the summer of 2013, Pastor Minh met Pastor Tam in a conference in Sweden and established a network with him. They shared their visions and started to cooperate in serving God back in Vietnam. Pastor Tam lives in Canada but he spends most of his time in Vietnam to teach the Bible in Christian rehabilitation clinics. These clinics were founded in 2002 and have freed hundreds of drug addicts.

A fortuitous meeting on the plane going to Oslo occurred in December 2015. I sat next to a young British girl who volunteered for St. Stephan's Society, founded by Jackie Pullinger who was a British charismatic missionary. In Pullinger's time, her clinic treated and freed at least

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<sup>1</sup> Thuy Dung 2014

500 drug addicts in Kowloon Walled City, an ungoverned area in Hong Kong. The addicts were treated without medication. In Pullinger's clinic, prayers and Bible study were an integral part of the rehabilitation process. This story confirmed my interest in investigating how the Christian rehabilitation program in Vietnam works to rehabilitate drug addicts without any medication.

Generally, drug rehabilitation aims to help drug addicts stop using drugs and maintain a drug-free lifestyle. Ultimately, the goal is for recovered addicts to be capable of returning back to being a functioning member of society. There are a number of pharmacological and behavioral treatments widely applied in traditional rehabilitation clinics. Having the same purpose of releasing drug addicts, the Christian rehabilitation program in Vietnam uses a different approach to treatment. They help the drug addicts go through the detoxification process without using medications, teach them the Bible and guide them to pray. They consider transformation through Christ as the key method to rehabilitate drug addicts.

### 1.1.3. What, why and how of the research

This thesis utilizes qualitative research in the form of case study to explore how transformation is understood and taking place in Christian rehabilitation clinics in Vietnam. My case study focused specifically on how transformation is experienced during the drug rehabilitation conducted in the Christian clinics located in Hanoi and Thai Binh province in the North of Vietnam.

In my opinion, the Christian rehabilitation program is unique among many other programs since they do not prescribe or use any medication to alleviate the symptoms of drug addiction. This thesis is thereby conducted to understand the nature of transformation in practice, both through interviewing those who promote this rehabilitation model and through interviewing people who have experienced the transformation. However, these Christian rehabilitation clinics formally require drug addicts to be converted before they can join the program in order to be transformed. Therefore, my concern is whether the experience of transformation requires any preconditions.

This thesis presents data collected through interviews and participant observation in two clinics in Vietnam. I spent two weeks in the clinics and a total of three weeks visiting the North of Vietnam. I investigated the perspectives of pastors and workers who promote transformation through mission and the perspectives of drug addicts whom experience transformation. I present and discuss relevant theory of mission and mission as transformation, to present a more

thorough understanding of how transformation in Christian drug rehabilitation centers in Vietnam is supposed to be acquired.

## 1.2. Literature overview

As a master's student in the Religion, Society and Global Issues program at MF, I became aware of "the resurgence of religion". Many authors have noticed that "public consciousness regarding religion and religion-related issues" is growing in European countries (Moberg, Granholm and Nynas, 2012, p.4). Remarkably, Zieberts and Riegel (2008, p.26) indicate that religion is recognized as co-participant in public debates especially relating to religious conflicts, moral ethical controversies, and immigration. Indeed, religion has influence on individual worldviews and social values. Therefore, I am interested in researching religion's role in society. Holding a Christian faith, I wanted to do research on how Christianity affects and helps people address social issues, conflicts, and social vices in practical ways. In this paper, I focus specifically on the problem of drug addiction in society and how Christianity can play a role in alleviating or solving this social issue.

The concept of mission as transformation promotes the role of religion in the society. As transformation is selected as the main theme of the thesis, I focus on Christian theories of mission and of mission as transformation.

There are some key writings I present about mission in general. The first book I mention is *What is mission* (Kirk, 1999). The book is a great source for missionaries because it covers almost all theological explorations of mission. Recently, there are many books and documents that mention mission in contemporary time. Particularly, *Introducing Christian Mission Today* (Goheen, 2014), *Mission in The New Millennium* (Ahonen, 2000) and *Mission as Transformation* (Samuel & Sugden, 1999) emphasized the *Missio Dei* concept and holistic nature of mission as central to missiology. This emphasis is also confirmed in some articles and reports of LWF and Lausanne conference. Transformation is considered an important dimension of holistic mission. In *Mission in Context* (2004) issued by LWF and the *Cape Town commitment* (2011) presented in Lausanne conference, personal and social transformation are mentioned. They also remind Christians that Christianity has the role of expanding the

Kingdom of God in which people experience “righteousness, peace and joy”<sup>2</sup>. Hence, mission as transformation is a channel bringing the Kingdom to the society.

It should be noted that the above literature on mission as transformation focuses on social transformation. The transformation is expected to bring “righteousness, peace and joy” to individuals and the society as stated above. Personal transformation is mentioned as the beginning point of social transformation but the process of transforming the society is emphasized more. Basically, the Bible provides richer information about personal transformation than Christian social literature. Therefore, the literature I discuss is the foundation and beginning point for my thesis. My intention is to investigate whether the relevant existing theory about mission and mission as transformation is in line with what people in the Christian rehabilitation program understand and experience as transformation in their own lives. I hope to gain more understanding of personal transformation such as which factors lead to the experience of transformation and how transformation takes place. These insights are expected to be obtained through data collected from interviews and participant observation.

Besides gaining deeper understanding on personal transformation, I aim to access some ideas of missiology relating to the practice of Christian drug rehabilitation. According to the Bible and most of recent missiological materials, mission should be brought back to the idea of *Missio Dei*. Doing mission should start from experience of God’s calling and love. In my thesis, I will evaluate whether these ideas work and what role they play in the drug rehabilitation program.

Additionally, I was introduced the book “Chasing the Dragon: One Woman's Struggle Against the Darkness of Hong Kong's Drug Dens” written by Jackie Pullinger<sup>3</sup> by the British girl I met on the plane as mentioned above. It is not empirical research but rather a biography of Pullinger and her ministry in Hong Kong. It is the only material I have known written about Christian rehabilitation programs applying transformation method.

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<sup>2</sup> Romans 14:17

<sup>3</sup> Pullinger, J. & Quicke, A. 2007

### 1.3. Analytical unit and the research question

#### 1.3.1. The analytical unit

As the Christian rehabilitation program in Vietnam treats drug addiction by bringing about change in one's mindset, also called experience of transformation, the research applies qualitative methodology. Among many Christian denominations, the Full Gospel denomination focuses on drug rehabilitation and they have opened many clinics known as Rebirth clinics. There are now eleven rehabilitation clinics across Vietnam. Due to the limitation of a one-year thesis and the similarities among these Christian clinics, only two clinics were selected for my case study research. One of the selected rehabilitation clinics is the oldest clinic opened in the North and located in Thai Binh province. Another center is the most developed clinic in terms of operating scale. These two clinics represent the rehabilitation situation in the North of Vietnam where drug addiction is more widespread than in the South<sup>4</sup>. Additionally, I selected three groups of interviewees. Group One consisted of pastors and Group Two consisted of workers who work for the clinics. Group Three was composed of drug addicts who are clients of the clinics. Nevertheless, Groups One and Two were sometimes combined during my writings because they have some similarities in terms of working and advocating for transformation while the members of Group Three consisted of the addicts who are supposed to experience transformation. My hope was that conducting interviews and participant observation of these three groups would help create a nuanced view on transformation in the Christian rehabilitation program.

#### 1.3.2. The research question and sub-questions

To gain an understanding of how mission brings transformation, this thesis will investigate how transformation is defined and achieved in the deliverance ministry. The research question is:

**How is transformation understood and experienced by pastors, clinic workers and drug addicts as a means of delivering drug addicts from addiction in the Christian rehabilitation program in Vietnam?**

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<sup>4</sup> Lam Dong Portal 2012

The research will have these following sub-questions:

1. How is transformation experienced by the pastors and clinic workers?
2. How is transformation experienced by the drug addicts?
3. How is transformation understood by the pastors and clinic workers?
4. How is transformation understood by the drug addicts?
5. How is the transformation process evaluated by the pastors and clinic workers?
6. How is the transformation process evaluated by the drug addicts?

These research question and sub-questions are expected to be answered based on data obtained from the participants of the Christian rehabilitation program in Vietnam including pastors, workers and drug addicts. Insights about their understanding and experience of transformation will be obtained through interviews and participant observation in this qualitative social research thesis.

In this thesis, the answer of “how” will be reflected upon through presenting the opinions and experience of pastors and clinic workers (Group One and Two) and drug addicts (Group Three) in two rehabilitation clinics. The term “drug addicts” is used to talk about clients in the clinics who are participating the program and in the rehabilitation process. Although they are not allowed to bring and use any drugs in the clinics, the term “drug addict” gives a vivid description of these clients who are under the treatment. Moreover, interview guides for these three groups are similarly formulated so that the answer of “how” will be orderly solved. Classifying the study participants into three groups helped in the comparison of the perspectives of the three groups based on corresponding subtopics arranged in the similar interview guides.

### **1.3.3. Presentation of the important concepts**

Mission as transformation has been developed on the theme of holistic mission - the whole Gospel for the whole person (*Mission in Context* 2004, p.24). In the 1983 Wheaton Conference, transformation is defined as “the change from a condition of human existence contrary to God’s purposes to one in which people are able to enjoy fullness of life in harmony with God” (quoted in Samuel & Sugden, 1999, p.x). Based on the transformation theme, evangelism should be understood as an expanse of the Kingdom of God, manifestation of the Holy Spirit (the Spirit) and the work of God (Samuel & Sugden, 1999, p.xii). Therefore, combining mission as transformation in holistic mission and the concept of Kingdom of God gives a transformation

model of mission. Mission in the model of transformation is “seeking to express the Lordship to Jesus on all aspects of life and religious change is the heart of all real changes (Samuel & Sugden, 1999, p.xvi).

According to Maldonado (2016, p.13), “deliverance ministry always accompanies the presence of the Kingdom. Deliverance is a manifestation that God’s Kingdom has arrived in people’s lives and in the life of their communities, cultures and nations”. I consider that the concepts of mission as transformation and deliverance ministry have great similarity. They both relate to the Kingdom. They both aim to bring individuals and the communities back to fellowship with God to be removed from negative issues such as drug addiction and moved towards to “righteousness, peace and joy”<sup>5</sup>. Moreover, I notice that the term “deliverance ministry” is particularly used among Christian ministers who do mission relating to supernatural manifestation of the Holy Spirit regarding to deliverance of demons and evil spirits. The term is also used by people working in the Christian rehabilitation program in Vietnam. Meanwhile, the term “mission as transformation” is used in most of the related scholarly literature on mission. In the thesis, I will use the term “deliverance ministry” to present the work of the Christian rehabilitation program in Vietnam because it is commonly used by the interviewees rather than the term “mission as transformation”.

According to Clarke & Jennings (2008, p.6), faith-based organization (FBO) is “any organization that derives inspiration and guidance for its activities from the teachings and principles of the faith or from a particular interpretation or school of thought within the faith”. FBOs have increasingly participated in the field of international development. FBOs are actively involved in public policy debates concerning development, social and political process impacting the poor and direct efforts to support, represent or engage with the poor (Clarke, 2008, p.25). FBOs are diverse in terms of their make-up, agendas and intentions. Some have strong missionary intention and try to impose their worldviews onto others to make conversions while others simply help people regardless of their religion and background. Depending on the role of religious belief and response to non-believers in providing aid services, there are different types of FBOs (Jennings, 2013, p.362). According to Jennings’s definitions (2013, P.362), the two Christian rehabilitation clinics in Vietnam are active and exclusive FBOs since

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<sup>5</sup> Romans 14:17

they let faith and religious teachings play an important role guiding their activities and only give to those who share the same faith.

#### **1.3.4. Limitations**

In the scope of one-year master's thesis, I aim to focus on how transformation is understood and experienced specifically in the two Christian rehabilitation clinics in Vietnam. Therefore, my research will not cover the following issues. First, I did not research the success rate statistics of the program. I have not investigated the statistics of how many people drop out during the program and how many relapse after the program. Interviews and participant observation are used to understand how transformation is experienced in the Christian rehabilitation program from "insiders" perspectives. These interviews do not aim to analyze and evaluate quality of the program from a statistical perspective. Second, I will not make a comparison among Christian and traditional rehabilitation clinics due to limit on time of doing the research. Finally, I will not focus on how the Vietnamese culture affects the work of Christian rehabilitation programs in Vietnam although culture is relevant to any social research. Rather, my research focuses on the understanding of transformation and the experience within the Christian environment in the two rehabilitation clinics.

#### **1.4. Research design**

As my topic is about experience and understanding of transformation in the Christian rehabilitation program in Vietnam, I chose a qualitative social research strategy using two rehabilitation clinics in Thai Binh province and Hanoi as the settings for my case study. The main collecting data method consisted of participant observation and interviews conducted based on an interview guide formed according to the research sub-questions. Responses to the main research question were explored by combining and analyzing the relevant theory and the findings obtained. A detailed presentation of my research methodology will be presented in chapter four.

#### **1.5. Structure and organization of the thesis**

After the introduction chapter, the thesis continues with chapter two providing background information about the two Christian rehabilitation clinics in Vietnam. It is a short introduction



of when and how the clinics were started. Moreover, the process of receiving clients is presented together with the 16 rules which drug addicts are supposed to follow.

In chapter three, I present a literature review on the concept of mission as transformation. I present the concept of *Missio Dei* in which there are disagreements on the focus of mission. Evangelical tradition sets the focus on evangelism while Ecumenical tradition sets the focus on social action. Unifying these two traditions, the concept of holistic mission recognizes that all aspects of mission are important as long as it can relate to Christ. Mission as transformation is one essential dimension of holistic mission. Mission as transformation is about bringing transformation not only to individuals but also to society. It is also about expanding the Kingdom of God to more aspects of life and more areas of society.

With the foundation of background information and relevant theory, the thesis continues with a presentation of research methodology in chapter four. Characteristics of the research including research strategy, research design and research method are presented. Then, the focus will be on how informants are selected according to certain criteria. Later, I present methods for collecting and analyzing the data obtained. Finally, I will discuss the quality of the research as a self-evaluation according to criteria set for qualitative social research.

After presenting how the research is conducted in order to answer the research question, I will present data collected from interviews and participant observation in chapter five. The findings chapter starts with a brief presentation of observation. Then, it goes through different topics including motivation, factors contributing to drug rehabilitation, experience and understanding on transformation and evaluation of the Christian rehabilitation process. Each topic considers perspectives of pastors, workers and drug addicts.

The thesis then integrates the relevant theory, the findings and my own insights into the discussion located in chapter six. By looking at similarities and differences among them, the discussion chapter provides insights about the journey of finding answers for the research question.

Finally, in the conclusion chapter, I present answers for the main research question and sub-questions. I incorporate contributions of the research and end with suggestions for potential further research on the topic of transformation in the Christian rehabilitation program in Vietnam.



## 2. BACKGROUND

In this chapter, I will shortly introduce the Christian rehabilitation program in Vietnam. The program uses transformation as the rehabilitation method and this method is being applied in the two clinics in Hanoi and Thai Binh province.

### 2.1. The Christian rehabilitation program in Vietnam

In 1999, Pastor Sy started the ministry in his hometown of Saigon, in the South of Vietnam. In the beginning, he basically worked alone. Pastor Sy found drug addicts in parks and hospitals. Most of them suffered from HIV. The ministry was challenged by the fear of this infectious disease. Because of love as Pastor Sy shared “There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love<sup>6</sup>”, he continues this ministry. He gave testimony, talked to them and taught them the Bible. Gradually, he gathered more and more drug addicts to live in one place. He now has many clinics across northern and southern Vietnam.

In 2000, Pastor Cam followed his teacher to open a rehabilitation clinic in Thai Binh province. While Pastor Sy started the ministry in Vietnam in the South, Pastor Cam started in the North. Pastor Cam is not a drug addict but he had chance to meet Pastor Sy and was inspired by Pastor Sy. Like Pastor Sy, Pastor Cam used his house for drug addicts to stay and be rehabilitated. With the increase in number of drug addicts participating in the program, Pastor Cam bought an 800m<sup>2</sup> land to open a clinic in Thai Binh. Pastor Cam has now opened eleven branch clinics in total. These branch clinics have nearly twenty clients each and are staffed by workers. These workers are former drug addicts who finished the two-year program and have worked in the clinics for several years before becoming the leaders in the administration. They are formally trained but their work is influenced by their own background as being recovered addicts, experience of helping other drug addicts for years, and by teachings from the pastors.

Overall, the Christian rehabilitation program is gaining respect and trust from the government. The pastors have been invited to governmental rehabilitation prisons to evangelize and introduce the program to drug addicts. Usually in Vietnam, Christian churches are not allowed to evangelize to large groups but the contribution of this rehabilitation program has raised the

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6 | John 4:18

status of the church in the community. This can be seen in the government allowing Christians to gather in large scale in the stadiums for Christmas services. Notably, the clinic of Pastor Sy in Hanoi is responsible for a five-year trial Christian rehabilitation program in a governmental prison in Ba Vi, Hanoi. Twice a week, people from the clinic including workers and clients come to the prison with musical instruments, Bible teaching materials and snacks. They organize the worship, Bible lessons and games for drug addicts in the prison. The program is evaluated as effective because many drug addicts participate and their attitudes are improving.

## **2.2. Overview of the program**

The program reaches drug addicts through evangelistic events and through personal testimonies of pastors and workers. Drug addicts who decide to participate in the program and their families, are asked to sign a commitment letter. The letter asks for the commitment from drug addicts that they put faith in God as the lord, will finish the two-year program and follow all instructions of the pastors and workers. The letter also asks for the commitment from their families that they will cooperate with the clinics during the rehabilitation process and make a monthly payment of two million VND for the rehabilitation treatment. Moreover, there are 16 rules that the clients are expected to follow while they participate in the program. The 16 rules have been translated from Vietnamese by me and are attached as Appendix 2.

There are two stages of the rehabilitation process. The first stage is the detox. It aims to remove all traces of drugs from the drug addicts' body. Hence, it is common to experience severe withdrawal symptoms such as muscle aches, insomnia, nausea and diarrhea. These withdrawal symptoms are common to any drug addict in his/her detox stage. New clients live in a separate room from seven to fifteen days. They are taken care of by the workers through prayers and massage to overcome withdrawal symptoms. Moreover, all life routines such as washing clothes, cooking and even taking bath are supported by the workers. Drug addicts are monitored continuously during the detox stage to ensure health safety.

After the drug addicts go through the detox stage and they can sleep and eat well, they are transferred to the recovery stage. They then live together as a community. They follow a schedule of learning the Bible both with their roommates and with other drug addicts in the clinic as the whole. The teaching is done by the pastors, guest speakers and the workers. There are many Bible courses about basic Christian faith and doctrines, transformation of mind, faith, power of the words of God, praying and worship. In addition, they are taught life skills and

simple apprenticeship such as raising chicken in the clinics. After six months, drug addicts are allowed to visit their families back home. The program lasts for two years and the drug addicts may either finish the program and come back to their families or continue to stay in the clinics. But normally, transformed drug addicts desire to stay one more year to experience more about transformation and study the Bible more. Hence, some addicts spend three years in the clinics in total.

Additionally, the Christian rehabilitation clinics have rules to reform healthy life routines for drug addicts. A day in the clinic starts at 5.AM. by alarm. After finishing personal hygiene, drug addicts have personal meditation including praying and reading the Bible. At 6.AM., the clinics open one-hour meditation for all people in the clinics. Afterwards, drug addicts have breakfast and continue to study the Bible until 10.AM. That is their first two-hour Bible class. From 10.AM. to 2.PM., they prepare and have lunch together. After that, they have second two-hour Bible class. From 4.PM. to 8.PM., they spend time to have some physical activities, apprenticeship and have dinner together. The day ends with worship time from 8.PM. to 10.PM. The worship time may be in the room with several roommates or in the common room with all people in the clinics. Saturday is free and only the worship time after dinner is kept. Meals provided in the clinics aim to give drug addicts physical health, especially for those who are in the detox stage so that they can overcome withdrawal symptoms quickly.



## 3. THEORY

### 3.1. Introduction to sources of the theory

In order to answer the research question about how transformation is understood and experienced in the Christian rehabilitation program in Vietnam, I will analyze data presented in the findings chapter and link my findings to relevant theories about transformation. It is thereby necessary to investigate how the concept of mission has been understood and developed in modern times. Gaining an overview of mission helps to understand why and how transformation is integrated into the contemporary missiology. There are four books used as main sources of theory in this chapter. The following is a brief summary of each of these books.

*What is Mission* (Kirk, 1999) puts focus on theological explorations of mission in a comprehensive and inclusive way. At the same time, it presents an exploration and definitions of mission what is mission in the modern and multi-religious world. Secondly, *Mission in The New Millennium* (Ahonen, 2000) explores foundations of mission and what it should include in the twenty-first century such as culture and social action. The main idea of these two books is that mission is God's sending and is not a human construct. Thirdly, *Introducing Christian Mission Today* (Goheen, 2014) also has quite full coverage of missiology from theological to historical perspectives of mission and to contemporary issues in mission. I focus on presenting the Chapter six "Holistic mission" in the book as it is relevant to the thesis' theme. Finally, *Mission as Transformation* (Samuel & Sugden, 1999) is an edited book in which Samuel and Sugden selected articles written in the nineties about transformation theory and holistic mission on both theological and practical aspects. Moreover, the book is a rich source of trending topics relating to the two above mentioned theories such as the Kingdom of God and Pentecostal mission. It also covers the holistic approach of mission from the early seventies. These two later books give essential details on the transformation dimension of mission.

### 3.2. Theoretical perspectives from those sources of theory

I am going to present the related theories on mission as transformation. First, I discuss mission through the lens of the *Missio Dei* concept. The concept guides mission back to its origin: God, while opens for different interpretations of what the concept is in particular. on the concept. Consequently, there has been a split within Christian traditions regarding the way mission is

understood and practiced. Particularly, there are Evangelical and Ecumenical traditions which put emphasis on word and deeds; Evangelism and the Social Gospel for justice respectively. Holistic mission is discussed as a solution to bridge the gap between these two traditions. Particularly, holistic mission adapts the idea of the Kingdom of God while transformation is one of its dimensions. Therefore, I will present an overview of the Kingdom of God theology and its characteristics to understand how the Kingdom idea is a foundation for missionary theories. Finally, focus on the transformation dimension of mission which is scholarly called mission as transformation is presented in both biblical and missiological perspectives.

### 3.2.1. Mission

Jesus has commanded and the Holy Spirit has empowered Christians to do mission, particularly written in Matthew 28:18-20 [the Great Commission] and Acts 1:8 respectively:

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

Christian missionaries are gaining more insights into mission through both their theological research and practice. Bible texts are continuously being interpreted and realized through Christian practice, therefore, full understanding of mission is also an evolving process. While it can be challenging to gain such understanding, it is possible and important to obtain a profound understanding of mission when doing mission. A profound understanding of mission is supposed to lead to a profound practice of mission which has been called for by God. According to Kirk (2000, p.24), “mission is what the Christian community [the church] is sent to do”. The following will present the concept of *Missio Dei* and interpretations on it to elaborate more on the nature of mission and mission intention.

#### 3.2.1.1. The concept of *Missio Dei*

There have been many different opinions on the nature of mission. The concept of *Missio Dei* is a foundation to solve questions of mission's nature. According to Ahonen (2000), *Missio Dei* is a Latin term meaning “God's sending” and had been presented at a mission conference in



Willingen in 1952 before it became widely used in missiology. The concept guides mission to “Trinitarian<sup>7</sup> thinking and to see it primarily as God’s own work, for which he himself is responsible” (p.43). The *Missio Dei* concept thereby directs mission’s foundation towards God Himself and emphasizes God’s love from which mission arises. Additionally, Ahonen (2000, p.21) emphasized that the origin of mission is the sending of the Son for salvation of the world. He presents an overview of the act of mission throughout history in which God shows His love in action: sent Jesus and then sent the church to do mission. As we can understand, mission based on the concept of *Missio Dei* can be seen as God’s mission in which He sent Jesus with the Holy Spirit and then the church to the world to fulfill His purpose on the earth. His purpose will be discussed more in 3.2.1.3.

### **3.2.1.2. Interpretations of Missio Dei**

There are many interpretations of the concept *Missio Dei* when Christian missionaries try to gain more understanding of mission (Ahonen, 2000, p.43). According to Ahonen (2000, p.44), the most known representative of secular interpretation is Hoekendijk – a secretary for evangelism of WCC. In Hoekendijk’s opinion, *Missio Dei* has shifted the origin and focus of mission from the church to God Himself, God is acting “in the secular world and through the creation”. Consequently, Hoekendijk commented that the church is most influential when it participates in *Missio Dei* in the world history. He believed that the Kingdom of God comes by “fulfillment of messianic promises” and its contribution to “justice, peace and love in the world” (Ahonen, 2000, p.44).

One critique of this secular interpretation is that it mixes God’s work of creation with His work of redemption or atonement. As a general theological understanding, God’s work of creation applies to all people while redemption is only found by accepting Jesus as lord and savior. While the secular interpretation broadens the coverage of mission and primarily put mission in the secular world. Going against this view, Krusche (quoted in Ahonen 2000, p.45) commented that redemption only comes from faith in “the crucified and risen Christ”.

Commenting on the disagreements on the secular interpretation, Ahonen (2000, p.46) emphasized “*Missio Dei* is God’s work towards the world but not all of that can be defined as mission in the sense of taking the Gospel into the world”. Besides God’s salvific action

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<sup>7</sup> The Christian doctrine of Trinity holds that God includes the Father, the Son [Jesus] and the Holy Spirit.

[redemption or atonement], He sustains and secures the creation by His law. Ahonen (2000, p.46) noted that there are two realms which should not be mixed although God's Reign is behind both realms. Spiritual realm is governed by the Gospel while secular realm is governed by God-given law and order, he declared. Ahonen (2000, p.47) also discussed the relationship between God's work of creation [general acts] and His work of redemption [salvific acts]. He generally indicated that the church [Christians] is "sent to participate in God's mission of God, which everywhere creates new life and which save and free humans in Christ" (p.49). Therefore, he pointed out that if salvific acts are mixed with general acts, mission loses its foundation and hope. If general acts are mutually exclusive with salvific acts and mission only focuses on salvific acts, mission loses its renewal power and limits its outreach to believers only thus isolating the demographic of non-believers. Thus, salvific and general acts must be distinguished while "united in the eschatological process to the final perfect revelation of the Kingdom and new creation of heavens and earth" (Ahonen, 2000, p.49). The difference in interpretations of *Missio Dei* forms the foundation for the difference in Evangelical and Ecumenical traditions as discussed in 3.2.2.

### 3.2.1.3. *Mission intention and motives*

*Missio Dei* is the basic concept from which we can build up the understanding of God's purpose for mission. Particularly, Berentsen, Engelsviken and Jørgensen<sup>8</sup> (2004, p.16) implied God's purpose for the world when defining mission using on the *Missio Dei* concept:

Mission is the sending of the church to the world, a sending which has its origin in the Triune God and consists in the task of communicating the Gospel about the Kingdom of God – in word, deed and sign – so that humans everywhere may come to faith in Christ as their Lord and Savior and be joined to the church by baptism.

Ahonen's interpretation of *Missio Dei* seems to be in agreement with the statement mentioned above. Ahonen (2000, p.46) indicated "missionary intention is that God has prepared salvation in His Son and sends people to witness to this salvation offered in Christ and to proclaim the lordship of Christ". Therefore, he noted that the nature of church is to witness God's actions in the world and communicate Jesus' Good News in both word and deed. In other words, every Christian is called to be a witness for Christ and persuade people to receive Christ in faith.

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<sup>8</sup> Translated from Norwegian to English by Engelsviken in his handouts for lectures given at MF Norwegian School of Theology in Autumn 2014

Although it is God's calling to do mission, there are many other factors that lead Christians to participate in mission. Missionary motives can be personal or social which reflects the social aspect of mission – care for the community. Generally, motives found in the Bible includes “obedience to the Great Commission<sup>9</sup>, obligation to bring glory to God and make known Christ's name everywhere” (Ahonen, 2000, p.85). According to Lutheran tradition, the main motive behind mission is to spread God's love (Ahonen, 2000, p.85). He continued that this motive comes from a gratitude for God's self-sacrificing love. The gratitude then inspires believers' commitment to obey to the missionary calling. As trials are expected when doing mission, commitment is required to hold on (Ahonen, 2000, p.85).

In addition, according to Beretsen, Engelsviken and Jørgensen (2004, p.16), the overall goal of mission is to expand the Kingdom of God. The idea of the Kingdom of God will be discussed more in 3.2.4. Though, specific goals of mission are broad and open to different interpretations which will be discussed more in 3.2.2. Kirk (1999, p.21) and Goheen (2014, p.236) agree that mission can only be properly understood and practiced when it is in line with God's purposes and Jesus' ministry. Kirk (1999, p.21) pointed out:

Theology of mission is a disciplined study which deals with questions that arise when people of faith seek to understand and fulfil God's purposes in the world, as these are demonstrated in the ministry of Jesus Christ.

As the concept of *Missio Dei* guides mission back to God's sending of Jesus and then the church, the above discussions are mainly about God - the Father and Jesus. Remarkably, Ahonen (2000, p.116) mentioned the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit in mission as an emphasis on *Missio Dei*. However, the guidance of the Holy Spirit is sometimes mysterious as it exceeds humans comprehensive power. Therefore, the church must “rely on, pray for and trust in that guidance”, he wrote. Additionally, Ahonen (2000, p.117) believed that “the Spirit prepares ground for mission before missionaries arrive” and this is called the provenience of the Spirit. Ahonen (2000, p.118) then pointed out that there are two reminders regarding to the provenience. Firstly, provenience confirms God's almightiness and His love for the whole world in His preparation and longing for salvation for all. Secondly, provenience is not determinism. According to Ahonen (2000, p.118), “Biblical faith discards predetermination and fatalism”. God has prepared but humans have their free will to receive salvation. Consequently,

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<sup>9</sup> Matthew 28:18-20

Ahonen recommended that mission should reach out to both responsive and less responsive people with flexible methods under the guidance of the Spirit, Ahonen (2000, p.117) asserted. God wants all to be saved and hence, all must have a chance to hear the Gospel. Ahonen (2000, p.120) finally summed up the role of the Spirit:

The Holy Spirit is the convenient agent [provenience] and guide of mission, and it is he who gives mission substance and power. In this work the Holy Spirit used human beings as his instruments, and he calls, equips and sends them for different tasks.

As we can see, the concept of *Missio Dei* provides a basis to gain understanding of mission's nature, intention and motives. Mission is the work of the Trinity with the intention of proclaiming the Kingdom. Specifically, Christians are personally called and guided by the Holy Spirit to participate in God's mission by continuing the ministry of Jesus on earth.

### 3.2.2. A split within missiology and solutions

After grasping the concept of *Missio Dei*, mission intention and motives, it is necessary to then find out God's specific purposes and the content of Jesus's ministry to gain deeper understanding of doing mission. God's purpose for Christians are diverse they include fellowship with Him, evangelism and discipleship. Jesus' ministry on earth addressed both spiritual and physical needs of humans, by offering forgiveness of one's sins and the promise of renew life. Moreover, the contemporary world is becoming more complex compared to the ancient world with changing global realities such as globalization, technology and violence. Therefore, there have been many disagreements in missiology about which purpose and aspect of Jesus' ministry should be prioritized.

The conflicting perspectives on which aspect of mission should be prioritized have led to a split in mission and forming Evangelical and Ecumenical [social action] traditions. The split has caused a need for holistic approach to bridge this division. Hence, holistic mission to connect and unite these perspectives and traditions has been put in discussion among Christian missionaries. The following will present these conflicting perspectives and how the holistic mission bridge the division.

### 3.2.2.1. Interpretations of Salvation

According to Ahonen (2000, p.87) there are two different perspectives on how to interpret the concept of salvation. Evangelism focuses on the forgiveness of sins while the Social Gospel emphasizes on the renewal of life. Western churches, which have been influenced by Augustine<sup>10</sup>, put strong emphasis on original sin. Therefore, salvation is defined as an answer for humans' righteousness before God in which Christ's atonement on the cross is essential. According to Augustine, every human has original sin and can only be saved from the circle of sin by God's grace. On the other hand, Eastern churches put strong emphasis on a new life which results from the resurrection of Jesus<sup>11</sup>. Consequently, salvation is defined as a spiritual process in which "participation in the Holy Spirit is essential" (Ahonen, 2000, p.87). As a whole, it can be seen that there are two sides of salvation – going from death to life. These two sides do not contradict but belong together. Jesus died for humans to give "forgiveness of sins which opens way to the renewal of every aspect of life", Ahonen (2000, p.86) summarized. He also quoted 2 Pet 1:4 which shows that both a deliverance from the corruption of the world under evil desires and a participation in the spiritual process of transformation are promised to Christians.

Nevertheless, Enlightenment philosophy developed in the 18<sup>th</sup> century emphasizes neither forgiveness of sin nor renewal of life but ethics and goodness in Jesus' ministry. Ahonen (2000, p.88) explained in detail the effect of Enlightenment philosophy on missiology in regards to salvation. Missionaries influenced by the Enlightenment philosophy believe "humans are basically good and there is no need for a special atonement" (Ahonen, 2000, p.88). He further explained that they focus on Jesus' ethical teachings about God as father and good morality. Jesus' death possibly demonstrates God's love and call for a positive response from humans. Consequently, in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Social Gospel "awakened the churches' conscience on social science and drew attention to operate and structural manifestation of sin such as unemployment and injustice" (Ahonen, 2000, p.88). Ahonen (2000, p.89) indicated that the goal of mission in the Social Gospel is to change society, not to convert people. The Social Gospel believes people will be changed as long as they are told what is right and wrong. Sin was ignored and Christian civilization was built up as the Kingdom of God, he explained.

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<sup>10</sup> Augustine (354-430) who formulated the doctrine of grace

<sup>11</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:12

### ***3.2.2.2. Evangelism versus Social Action***

The difference in interpretation of salvation which emphasizing on either forgiveness of sins or renewals of life, leads to difference in practice of doing mission. Particularly, due to a difference in setting focus of salvation and the movement of the Social Gospel in the 19th century, the question of salvation and Gospel's nature has been raised in many meetings of IMC and WCC during 1930s (Ahonen, 2000, p.89). Ahonen explains that under the strong influence of Ecumenical tradition, Christian mission at that time had been criticized as having little distinguished nature and hence, similar to any other religions' mission. Nature of mission was argued to shift focus on different grounds rather evangelism such as social effects, new humanity and social ethics, he continued. It can be seen that the tension between Evangelical and Ecumenical traditions were unsolved despite of many attempts to unite. By discussing contents of many mission conferences from 1930s to 1970s, Ahonen (2000) showed that Ecumenical tradition presented their new trends and understanding of mission while Evangelical tradition criticized these new perspectives.

### ***3.2.2.3. Evangelical and Ecumenical traditions***

Goheen (2014, p.227) noted that it is important to review the "two traditions of mission" in order to understand the contemporary mission. They are debating on the focus of mission, which is either "verbal proclamation of the Gospel [Evangelism or fundamentalist revivalist stream or Evangelical tradition] or social action for justice and mercy [Liberal Social Gospel stream or Ecumenical tradition]". Society is the place where "both word and deed witness to the Kingdom" (Goheen, 2014, p.228). Nevertheless, there is a split and debate regarding whether word or deed should be center of mission.

Goheen (2014, p.229) indicated individualism is one of reasons causing an indifference in the Evangelical tradition towards social action. In Evangelical tradition, sin is personal and its manifestation in the society is limited. Correspondingly, the center of salvation is for individuals. Additionally, the Evangelical tradition holds a "pessimistic view of history" in which the Kingdom is in the future and social action is fruitless in this dark world.

Afterwards, Goheen (2014, p.233) pointed out the three main characteristics of the Ecumenical tradition. Firstly, it is "worldly and naturalistic". He explained "the Kingdom merged with social progress...salvation was equated with well-being". Secondly, it is anthropocentric.

Mission is more likely “a project of human effort, aspirations and technique”. Finally, it concentrates on society at the expense of the individual. Goheen (2014, p.234) particularly commented, “salvation reduced to a change in society and mission limited to social action”. However, he recognized the contribution of the Social Gospel because it shows a long-term treatment of human problems with an emphasis on educational, socioeconomic and technological development.

#### **3.2.2.4. Towards a solution**

Recognizing the tension, the Wheaton World Evangelical Fellowship (1983) denounced the dichotomy of evangelism and social action. However, it did not put evangelism as priority. It instead stated “mission of the church includes both proclamation of the Gospel and its demonstration” (quoted in Goheen 2014, p.230). It also agreed that sin is not only individual but also in social structures.

Furthermore, Goheen (2014, p.230) remarked that the recovery of holistic dimensions of mission has made a turn in Evangelical tradition in the middle of this century. Holistic view reminds and challenge missionaries to engage in “Christian social imperative”. Consequently, social action is now recognized as part of the church mission. The relationship between Evangelical and Ecumenical traditions are not “either or” but “both and” (Goheen 2014, p.231). Social action is possibly a result of evangelism because lives transformed by putting faith in Jesus often lead to social concern. Additionally, social action is possibly “a bridge to evangelism: social concern can break down prejudice and suspicion so that one can share the Gospel”. Moreover, evangelism and social action are possibly “equal partners”. Nevertheless, the views on split between evangelism and social action are still highly debated in missiology (Goheen, 2014, p.233).

It is challenging to solve the tension through equal emphasis on evangelism and social action. Conn (quoted in Goheen 2014, p.231) explained a reality: “we are far from a holistic solution that integrates the two components...Formerly, the emphasis was on either soul or body, church or society, evangelism or social action”. We have limited resources even though we recognize the holistic nature of mission which should cover both evangelism and social action. Therefore, it is necessary to understand which is primary, he commented. According to *the Lausanne Covenant* (1974):

In the church's mission of sacrificial service evangelism is primary...If we must choose, then we have to say that the supreme and ultimate need of all humankind is the saving grace of Jesus Christ, and that therefore a person's eternal, spiritual salvation is of greater importance than his or her temporal well-being.

We can see that although Ecumenical traditions have widened the Gospel to vertical dimensions: reaching out for society and reminding the church of its responsibility for social justice, it sometimes veers from the tradition foundation of mission: evangelism. The tension continued until the Bangkok and Lausanne conferences which Ahonen (2000, p.91) noted that they marked "the end of an era in ecumenical missiology". He presented the main content in a mission conference in Bangkok in 1973 in which the Social Gospel was criticized as it "threatened to turn into a general social ethic with a firm belief in people's ability to resolve the problems of the world" (Ahonen, 2000, p.91). Realizing that this went far against biblical understanding of mission, the first Lausanne conference in 1974 re-defined mission. The conference concluded that "faith took back its essential position. Faith does not only relevant to mission but be the goal of mission" (Ahonen, 2000, p.92). Particularly, the Lausanne Covenant agreed upon the ultimate authority of Bible, the proclamation of Christ as the only Savior, the need for conversion and faith for salvation, and the missionary goal of conversion and church planting.

Contemporarily, many evangelical authors agree that mission should be guided back to its original focus. Forgiveness of sin or evangelism should be the starting point in doing Christian mission. It was written "...our Savior who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth<sup>12</sup>". It is about establishing a new and right relationship to God first and other benefits of salvation may follow<sup>13</sup>. Therefore, solution of human or social problems should not be confused with salvation. Similarly, Kirk (1999, p.57) commented that mission is "everything the church is sent to do" but that everything "must be pervaded by the overriding commitment to evangelism" although mission does not include evangelism only. Ahonen (2000, p.86) concluded that salvation is forgiveness of sins which leads to renewal of every aspect of life.

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<sup>12</sup> 1 Timothy 2:4

<sup>13</sup> Matthew 6:33



Further, Kirk (1999, p.36) commented that evangelism is to “tell the story of Jesus Christ with conviction” is a distinguishing feature of Christian mission compared to non-Christian missions. Mission contains evangelism but all types of mission must be committed to evangelism, Kirk affirmed. He continued to give a detailed definition and important features of evangelism:

...evangelism is about witnessing to or making known good news...that sin is forgiven, its power over lives broken and they are restored to a life-giving fellowship with God, through Christ. It is about inviting to accept that message and challenging to act in response to the message's content. (p.61)

Kirk (1999, p.63) then discussed contents of the Gospel. It is first the announcement of peace, which is “the sense of possessing a fullness of welfare and health, completeness and security”. It is then “the bringing of good news” about God's deliverance, care, faithfulness, victory and salvation which bring joy to people. The central message is salvation which “comes to mean the people's freedom from whatever confines or restricts their ability to flourish as God intends. It is finally “the proclamation that your God reigns”. The Kingdom of God is not “constraining, vindictive or discriminating but liberating” (Kirk, 1999, p.64). Furthermore, the end of evangelism is “a response from individuals to the offer of forgiveness and a new beginning with God” (Kirk, 1999, p.65). It marks a turning point to a creation of a whole new transformed life.

Thus, Ecumenical tradition reminds Evangelical tradition of its original focus so that it stands more firmly on the primary position in evangelism. On the other hand, Ecumenical tradition reminds Evangelical tradition of the holistic nature of mission and “evangelism is not shouting from a distance” (Goheen, 2014, p.244). We can see Ecumenical tradition has reengaged mission so that mission is not only about preaching the words of God but demonstrating the words through social action. Goheen (2014, p.244pp.) pointed out some recommendations for missionaries. It is about “clothe the Gospel in the love of Christ” and “listen to others' stories and telling ours”. Particularly, “evangelism should be something that connects organically to and flows naturally out of the daily experiences of our lives”. Indeed, “evangelistic words will be heard only if they are authenticated by the lives of the Christian communities”.

### 3.2.2.5. *Holistic mission*

First, I present the holistic nature of Jesus' ministry. Despite being criticized for leaving the original message of salvation, the movement of the Social Gospel reminds Christian missionaries of a more holistic effect of mission on the world. Consequently, both evangelical and ecumenical philosophers agree on the holistic nature of mission while there are still disagreements on which aspects of mission should be emphasized. "Holistic" can be regarded as "integral, total and universal", Ahonen (2000, p.92) defined. He confirmed that "the whole Christ including His incarnation, ministry, life, death, resurrection and the second coming must be paid attention". He also pointed out that human beings have both individual and communal, physical and spiritual, historical and eternal aspects. Ahonen (2000, p.92) then explained the holistic view of mission is "to justice both to Christ's work of salvation in its entirety and to genuine encounter with the world and its needs". Thus, mission cannot be restricted to one aspect of human life. The whole Gospel is for the whole person. Recognizing the tension between Evangelism and the Social Gospel, Beretsen, Engelsviken and Jørgensen (2004, p.16) noted that neither of them should stand alone in mission. Being evangelical missionaries, these three authors did not reject the Social Gospel while commenting that social action alone cannot be mission according to holistic Jesus' ministry. Rather, both Evangelism and the Social Gospel are parts of mission which reaching the world through all aspects: spiritual, physical and social.

Additionally, here the concept of *Missio Dei* is mentioned and highlighted again. The concept reveals that mission is God's and mission has a holistic nature. Applying *Missio Dei* in holistic mission, we first understand that missionaries are God's co-workers who participate in almost all of missionary aspects. However, God takes full responsibility of mission and only He decides the final coming of the Kingdom. Ahonen, (2000, p.43) indicated that *Missio Dei* unites God's actions in His salvation history from "creation, revelation, the incarnation, the atonement and the resurrection and the final appearance of the Reign of God". Holistic mission includes both soul and body; the present and the future. Kirk (1999, p.53) summarized doing mission according to Jesus' ministry:

Following the way of Christ quite simply requires communicating the good news of Jesus and the Kingdom, insisting on the full participation of all people in God's gifts of life and well-being and providing the resources to meet people's needs.

Second, I present the holistic nature of justification. Justification is an essential missionary concept. One of Martin Luther's greatest contribution is the "discovery" of justification by faith as a gift of God<sup>14</sup> (Ahonen, 2000, p.93). According the theology of justification, humans are justified not by their own deeds but by putting faith in Christ – His atonement and resurrection. Only because of Christ and through Christ, humans are acquitted and looked upon as righteous [right] in God's eyes. Sin, death and damnation in humans' soul are replaced by grace, life and salvation of Christ. Consequently, justification declares salvation is wholly "a gift from God by grace which is received freely" (Ahonen, 2000, p.94). This recognition frees people from being slaves of self-attempts to be saved by deeds<sup>15</sup>. In other words, believers do good deeds because they are already saved, not to be saved.

The understanding of justification decides how word, deeds and spiritual renewal in Christ are viewed in holistic mission. Justification is about "declaring a person righteous [forensic] and making him righteous [effective]" as Christ is present in believers through faith (Ahonen, 2000, p.94). Faith in Christ leads to both forgiveness of sins and spiritual renewal. Ahonen (2000, p.94) concluded that "the Gospel concerns the whole human beings and renews a person's whole life". Hence, it is unnecessary to sharply distinguish word, deed and spiritual renewal. Proclamation of the Gospel contains word and deeds as when the words are proclaimed, the content of the words manifest<sup>16</sup> (Goheen, 2015, p.237). The words learnt from the Bible also brings both forgiveness of sins and spiritual renewal, Ahonen (2000, p.95). Ahonen (2000, p.94) called these characteristics of justification including forensic and effective as "inseparable aspects of the same process and remind us of the holistic nature of the Gospel". Thus, mission concerns the whole human being – to be saved from sins and saved to renewals.

### 3.2.3. Mission as transformation

With the understanding of *Missio Dei* and holistic mission, we can conclude that mission is distinctly about salvific acts of the Trinity with the participation of Christian communities. It was specifically written in *Mission in Context* (2004, p.24):

Trinity describes "God in mission" as always a God for others; namely, the whole of humankind, the world, the entire creation. The Trinity is a communion in mission,

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<sup>14</sup> Romans 1:17

<sup>15</sup> Ephesians 2:8-10

<sup>16</sup> Psalm 33:9

empowering and accompanying the One who is sent, the beloved, to impact the world with transformation, reconciliation, and empowerment.

Thus, transformation is one dimension in which Christians are called and empowered to impact the society. The following section will present an overview of transformation which is the work of the Trinity to transform individuals and society and will then proceed focus on mission as transformation in theory and in practice. Cray (1999, p.40) commented that mission is not about putting either evangelism or social action on priority but “an openness to the whole agenda of the Kingdom”. Thus, as a part of holistic mission, mission as transformation brings Evangelism and the Social Gospel together in order to manifest the Kingdom of God on earth.

### ***3.2.3.1. Overview of transformation***

The idea of transformation has been developed throughout history by many contributors including the growth of Pentecostal movement and globalization. Particularly, the Pentecostal movement pointed out “role of the Holy Spirit in bringing experience of transformation” (Samuel & Sugden 1999, p.xii). Ahonen (2000, p.47) introduced transformation as one of three dimensions<sup>17</sup> of mission in the light of *Missio Dei* concept. In the same light, Samuel & Sugden (1999, p.xii) suggested that transformation includes “the development of the Kingdom, the role of the Spirit and the work of God in creation” as Trinity. Also basing on *Missio Dei, Mission in Context* (2004, p.32) issued by the LWF provided more detailed explanation:

Transformation is a continuous process of rejection of that which dehumanizes and desecrates life and adherence to that which affirms the sanctity of life and gifts in everyone and promotes peace and justice in society. This comes from the knowledge of the gracious will of God, who calls, justifies, and empowers people, through the Holy Spirit, to be conformed to the image of God’s Son, offering the self as the instrument of righteousness.

Thus, it can be seen that transformation is first perceived in Christ’s resurrection. Similarly, Ahonen (2000, p.48) indicated that transformation is “the great transformation in the resurrection power of Christ which is already active by God’s saving grace”. Furthermore, it is noted in the *Mission in Context* (2004) that there are changes and processes occurring in the world which can be considered self-improvement to promote justice and humanity, but that

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<sup>17</sup> Transformation, reconciliation and empowerment

does not fall under the category of transformation. The transformation that Christians are referring to when they use this term is to describe God's work of grace in His creation. The *Cape Town Commitment* (2011) also agreed that transformation which "the Gospel produces is the work of God's grace" by putting faith in Christ's salvation and obey His teaching through the sanctification of the Spirit. It is included in the *Mission in Context* (2004, p.33) that the transformation is the Holy Spirit's work "in and through the church to the whole world".

Additionally, it is indicated in the *Mission in Context* (2004, p.33) that transformation includes personal and social transformation. When a person puts faith in Jesus, he/she receives the gift of justification by grace as previously discussed. Being justified by grace empowers Christians to experience transformation. Moreover, these transformed Christians [the church] are empowered by the Spirit to spread transformation to society. Social transformation is about renouncing and denouncing "unjust and violent practices and structures in public and domestic spheres as sinful and destructive to life in society" (*Mission in Context*, 2004, p.34).

### ***3.2.3.2. Overview of mission as transformation***

Mission as transformation is one of the most mentioned themes in mission today. Summarizing the personal and social effects of transformation as mentioned above, the 1983 Wheaton Conference (quoted in Samuel & Sugden, 1999, p.x) presented a statement of transformation from the biblical perspective:

...transformation is the change from a condition of human existence contrary to God's purposes to one in which people are able to enjoy fullness of life in harmony with God. This transformation can only take place through the obedience of individuals and communities to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, whose power changes the lives of men and women by releasing them from the guilt, power and consequences of sin, enabling them to respond with love toward God and towards others and making them new creatures in Christ.

The statement gives an answer to polarities between Evangelism and the Social Gospel, Samuel & Sugden (1999, p.x). Mission of transformation shows that both proclamation of the Gospel [Evangelism] and social action [the Social Gospel] are parts of mission. It thereby can be seen that the question is not whether mission involves social action but how to involve social action. As social action closely relates to secular culture and policies, it is essential for the church to

understand why and how mission can integrate social action without losing “their Christian undergirding and vision (Samuel & Sugden, 1999, p.xi).

Samuel & Sugden (1999, p.xvi) presented the concept of mission as transformation from a practical perspective. Mission as transformation is the mission of the Kingdom to free humans from destructive forces and “express the Lordship of Jesus over all aspects of life”. Transformation “does not give priority to any area of life as an area for mission but insists that religious change is at the heart of all issues of life” (Samuel & Sugden, 1999, p.xvi). They also emphasized that transformation takes place in church “as its life and being”; and spread to the surrounding world. It indeed starts from each believer who will speak transformation to the world “who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit”<sup>18</sup>. Samuel & Sugden (1999) concluded that the Kingdom is a new order which Jesus started and will complete; and wherein relationships between God and humans as well as among humans, are restored.

In the *Mission as Transformation* article, Samuel (1999) comprehensively presented the transformation aspect of mission. As love is the main motive for mission, believers cannot enter the Kingdom alone without concern for their neighbors (Samuel 1999, p.227). Indeed, believers are given two main commands: evangelism and actions towards the creation [social action or the Social Gospel]. It means that they must respond to societal issues while introducing people to experience personal spiritual transformation. Being aware of disagreements on which part of mission should be prioritized as discussed above, Samuel (1999, p.228) noted that evangelists argued evangelism was primary and creation mandate promoting social justice was secondary in theory. However, these two mandates cannot be separated in practice according to practitioners. Samuel (1999, p.228) showed that only ten percent of time used in evangelism is spent directly telling about the Gospel while the remaining is for helping people and their living environment change. Yet, missionaries believe that evangelism was their primary when doing mission, he observed.

Samuel (1999, p.233) then discussed more about the integration of evangelism and social action in mission as transformation in practice. He affirmed that social change was not “a parallel thing separating from evangelism”. He explained that when Christians do good deeds, it is

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<sup>18</sup> 2 Corinthians 3:18

evangelism. Evangelism occurs when they answer or explain to the others the reasons why they involve themselves in these social actions and then relate their actions to Christ. It can be said, “all our callings in life must bear witness to the lordship of Jesus” (Goheen, 2014, p.254). Similarly, Kirk (1999, p.20) indicated almost all believers who do works which can be related to Christ are “intrinsically missionaries” despite the fact that, missionaries’ work involves Christ in the most direct way.

### ***3.2.3.3. Main elements of mission as transformation***

According to Samuel and Sugden (1999, p.xii), transformation has some key elements. Fundamentally, “transformation is the transformation of communities to reflect the Kingdom’s values”. Thus, the concept of the Kingdom is foundation for mission in general as mentioned in 3.2.1.3 and mission as transformation in particular. The idea will be discussed more in 3.2.4. Other key elements of transformation are “integration of evangelism and social change, mission as witness and journey in the world, freedom and power for the “excluded” and reconciliation”, Samuel and Sugden (1999, p.xii) mentioned.

Furthermore, Samuel (1999, p.229) found some components of mission as transformation as the following. Mission as transformation is “to see the integral relation between evangelism and social change; and not allow them to stand alone”. They must both relate to Christ and what He has done for people. Mission as transformation is a “witness and journey within the world”. Christians witness and do mission as transformation and invite others to participate in that mission journey. Mission as transformation is about “freedom and power”. It emphasizes liberating and empowering aspects of the Gospel for both individuals and the society. Mission as transformation guides the focus to reconciliation between God and humans, among humans and humans when broadening “the scope of Gospel from individuals to the society”. Mission as transformation “emphasizes on change and hope”. It is about “building up communities of change”.

Samuel (1999, p.232) then explained more detail about building these communities. Once experiencing personal transformation in Christ, believers often commit to giving back to the community. Similar to personal transformation, community change is a journey in which people are invited to join, to experience and witness together. It is a journey of “entering, involvement and change” (Samuel 1999, p.233). As a journey, mission as transformation requires long term commitment to self and to the communities.

### 3.2.4. The Kingdom of God

The Kingdom of God is a biblical and theological foundation of mission developed by evangelicals and Pentecostals during the 1980s (Samuel & Sugden 1999, p.3). Contemporarily, there is an increasing use of the concept as an essential reference to mission and its related theories including holistic mission and mission as transformation. In many missiological materials, the term “Reign of God” is also used to refer to the Kingdom. The term specifically reflects a basic nature of His Kingdom: wherever He reigns. While “the Kingdom of God” gives a more general sense. In this thesis, I use the latter term with an intention to emphasize the detailed nature and consequence of God’s Reign in His Kingdom: as giver of life and transformation. The following will go through the idea of the Kingdom and its characters. Afterwards, the idea of the Kingdom will be used as the foundation to see how the split between evangelism and social action, holistic mission, and mission as transformation engage the idea of the Kingdom.

#### 3.2.4.1. Overview of the Kingdom

The Kingdom of God is the central message of Jesus during His ministry on Earth. He often mentioned “the Kingdom of God” in His teachings. In other words, to evangelize is to proclaim the Kingdom in Jesus’ ministry (Goheen, 2014, p.238). As written in the four books of Gospels, He called for repentance because the Kingdom has come near. Ahonen (2000, p.148) asserted that mission can be correctly understood under the perspective of the Kingdom. Only the understanding of the Kingdom gives an adequately foundation on when considering missionary issues such as eschatology, justice and ecology.

It is first essential to know how the Kingdom is presented and how one can enter and participate. In Jesus’ teaching, the Kingdom is “visible in the secular world in miraculous signs and wonders and in the community of forgiven sinners who began to live in the Kingdom principles taught by Jesus” (Samuel & Sugden, 1999, p.14). By Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross, believers can freely enter into the Kingdom. And by Jesus’ resurrection on the third day, the Kingdom has been brought into life in the world. Afterwards, He sent the Spirit to equip and empower believers to continue His ministry on Earth: “live, proclaim and demonstrate” the Kingdom (Samuel & Sugden, 1999, p.14). Entering the Kingdom is not by deeds and efforts but by God’s grace and by faith in Christ. The church must urge individuals to accept Christ, join His new community and let God on the throne in all aspects of life, Samuel & Sugden (1999) declared.



It is then necessary to understand what the Kingdom is. According to Johnston (quoted in Cray 1999, p.26), the Kingdom can be fundamentally understood as “the present inner rule of God...in the heart”. From the inner and personal spheres, the Kingdom spreads by a larger extent to the society, on which the Social Gospel is putting emphasis. Therefore, both Evangelism and the Social Gospel have used the Kingdom as their theological framework, either as God’s Reign in individual’s heart or in communities. Theologically, there are “righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit”<sup>19</sup> in the Kingdom. In the four Gospel books, Jesus did not introduce a totally new kingdom but used parables to illustrate and build up the understanding of His Kingdom based on the current available understanding of listeners. That is, “instead of the new age replacing the old, it had invaded it without totally displacing it” (Cray, 1999, p.28). Thus, His Kingdom has an overlap with the world and starting from Jesus’ ministry time until His upcoming return. The Kingdom is “the presence of the future” (George Ladd, quoted in Cray, 1999, p.28). The Kingdom is already in presence in the secular world but still waiting for its full manifestation. Thus, it is “the already” and “the not yet” in nature.

#### ***3.2.4.2. Characteristics of the Kingdom***

First, I present “the already” and “the not yet” characteristic of the Kingdom and its implications. Grasping an overview of the Kingdom forms a foundation for looking for its characters. As presented above, the Kingdom contains “the already” and “the not yet” elements. Kuzmic (1999, p.149) indicated that there is tension between “the already” and “the not yet” in the reality of the Kingdom. Ahonen (2000, p.148) explained about this tension:

The Reign of God is already in our midst now, in Christ we are already saved now, but we have not yet reached our final destination, for the Reign of God has not yet been manifested perfectly.

The Kingdom is evident both through “the already” and “the not yet” by its transforming effect on human personal life and on the world. The Kingdom is first “the already” – the present. It has been activated and manifested through miracles of healing and deliverance through Jesus Himself, His proclamation and His demonstration of power in His ministry from His time on earth. It is also manifested through the compassion and good deeds of Christians. Nevertheless, the Kingdom has opposition from demons and human sources (Cray, 1999, p.30). Moreover, in

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<sup>19</sup> Romans 14:17

“the already” Kingdom – the age of grace, people have right to accept or reject it. These indicates that the Kingdom is “the not yet” of reaching its consummation – the future. The Kingdom is not yet presented in “its irresistible power and overwhelming force” (Cray, 1999, p.31).

How do “the already” and “the not yet” then work regarding to personal Christian life and mission? The Kingdom is “the redemptive activity of God in history through the person of Jesus” (Kuzmic, 1999, p.149). People are invited to enter the Kingdom by repentance and faith in Jesus. In Gospel teaching, “the already” – the death and resurrection of Jesus are more decisive than “the not yet” (Kuzmic, 1999, p.149). Faith should put its gravity on “the already” of what have been taken place in history. On the other hand, believers are called to active participate towards “the not yet”. Their work for “the not yet” will be preserved and perfected in the fully manifested Kingdom, Kuzmic (1999) added. It can be seen that salvation is pronounced for people and then for their environment. Particularly, both Ahonen (2000, p.148) and Goheen (2014, p.249) pointed out that in “the not yet”, the church [believers] is “a means, a servant and an announcer of the future” – which is the fully manifested Kingdom. Believers who have entered the Kingdom are invited to participate in “the already” and expect “the not yet”. Thus, it can be seen that only the church [believers] is called and authorized to witness and then share the Gospel by putting faith to enter “the already” Kingdom and then participate in proclaiming and demonstrating both “the already” and “the not yet” Kingdom to the world.

How do “the already” and “the not yet” finally impact on the church when doing mission? The presence of the Kingdom is among Christians by Christ’s victory on the cross. However, sins still have its power in the world. They will be fully overcome when Christ returns. Therefore, the “not yet” gives the church an awareness of the “incompleteness of all things”, Ahonen (2000, p.148) explained. At the same time, it gives a vision of what is to come – which the church should aim to. Thus, the “not yet” puts “hope, courage and openness towards the future” in mission, he continued. There is a hope that in Christ’s return, God’s plan of restoring the entire creation to the wholeness will be fulfilled. Salvation thereby includes resurrection of individuals and full restoration of the broken and sinful creation. The world will then truly be the Kingdom in “the not yet”. Similarly, Cray (1999, p.42) also commented that “the already” gives people the taste of the Kingdom – experiences of transforming power which then give them a hope of fully consummated Kingdom in the future – “the not yet”, which challenges

their faith in the present. He then concluded that “the already” and “the not yet” keep believers from both “triumphalism and pessimism” in mission.

Similarly, Goheen (2014, p.251) claimed “the Kingdom will arrive fully only when Christ returns and until that day our efforts will bear the character of witness”. When witnessing and proclaiming the Kingdom, love is the key which “offers merciful relief, seeks justice and hopes for conversion” (p.252). Thus, he underlined that the bottom line of social action was to “see people converted to Jesus” with the foundation of witnessing and sharing God’s love.

Second, I present the justice and the work of the Spirit in the Kingdom. Cray (1999, p.36) indicated that the king is responsible for justice in his kingdom. Hence, the Kingdom of God is also linked with proclaiming and administering justice to the people, he pointed out. Goheen (2014, p.248) agreed to this point by writing that “the Gospel is Gospel of the Kingdom – the restoration of God’s rule over that world”. Thus, social action is not an act of charity but an act of justice in the light of the Kingdom, according to Cray (1999, p.35). Above all, “God’s greatest intervention of justice is restoration of justice for the world through Jesus’ Atonement”, he pointed out. God died for people to justify those who have faith in Him.

While “the agenda of the Kingdom” is found in Jesus’ restoration of justice, the dynamic of the Kingdom is in “the work of the Spirit” (Cray, 1999, p.36). Cray (1999) then discussed about relation between the Kingdom, the cross and the Spirit. The Spirit empowered and equipped Jesus for His ministry of teaching, healing and deliverance. Although they are different areas of mission in our times, all are part of a broad picture of mission and the promise of receiving the Spirit power. In order to reconcile believers with the Father and let them experience the power of the Spirit, Jesus died on the cross. Cray (1999, p.38) emphasized “there could be no Pentecost without Calvary”. Before the world can be restored in justice and experience the Spirit power, Jesus must die on the cross to open the Kingdom for the world.

Since then, the Spirit which is “the executive, ambassador or steward of the Kingdom” has spread out to all believers. Wallis (quoted in Cray 1999, p.39) stated:

The goal of Biblical conversion is not to save souls apart from history, but to bring the Kingdom of God into the world with *explosive force*; it begins with individuals, but it is for the sake of the world.

It means that when people put faith on the atonement of Jesus on the cross, they are born of the Spirit to enter into the Kingdom (Cray 1999, p.39). Men are then empowered and equipped by the Spirit to do the works of the Kingdom. They are agents of the Kingdom as “to be converted is to be recruited” (Cray, 1999, p.39). The Spirit gives gifts to believers to evangelize, heal, do miracles and showing mercy, etc. in order to tangibly manifest the Kingdom. Thus, Cray (1999, p.40) concluded that to enter and become involved in the Kingdom one needs to submit to Jesus’ Lordship and the Spirit’s leadership. He finally concluded that all aspects of mission, either evangelism, social actions or signs and wonders, should open “the whole agenda of the Kingdom”. Mission according to the Kingdom’s agenda requires “personal experience of the power and leading of the Spirit” (Cray, 1999, p.40). Padilla (quoted in Cray 1999, p.40) summarized:

The Gospel is Good News concerning the Kingdom, and the Kingdom is God’s rule over the totality of life. Every human need therefore can be used by the Spirit of God as a beach-head for the manifestation of his kingly power.

Third, I present “the Kingdom is like...” characteristic and its demand of response. Jesus’ teachings written in the four books of Gospel, starts with a description, “the Kingdom of God is like...” Notably, he does not use the phrase “the same as” in trying to describe the Kingdom. Thus, the Kingdom has three characteristics as illustrated in Jesus’ teaching (Cray, 1999, p.32). First, the Kingdom can be “compared to aspects of ordinary life and can be lived out”. Second, the Kingdom may be “unlike the way we accustomed to live”. Third, the Kingdom is not “precisely identified with human systems, concerns or aspirations”.

Remarkably, there is a demand for human response in Jesus’ teaching of the Kingdom (Cray 1999, p.32). He commented that the Kingdom contains “divine initiative and human response”. There is a call for repentance, faith and discipleship in the Kingdom. Cray (1999, p.32) discussed the challenges Christians may face even after they commit to the Kingdom. For example, in the Bible, the disciples kept learning and mastering the teaching to perform the Kingdom’s works. Although they had received Jesus’ teaching on the idea of the Kingdom, yet they sometimes failed. These human failures through “the weakness and foolishness of the cross”, also provide opportunity for “redemption and power of the Kingdom becomes available for all<sup>20</sup>”, (Cray, 1999, p.33). Cray explained that Jesus’ resurrection is the proof of what Jesus

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20 1 Corinthians 1:18-2:5

has achieved and will fully achieved when He returns. Therefore, there is a hope for Christians to firmly participate and commit to the work of the Kingdom as they believe God will overwhelmingly reign after all.

### ***3.2.4.3. Mission, holistic mission and mission as transformation under the Kingdom of God's perspective***

Now that the related missiological concepts including holistic mission, mission as transformation and the Kingdom have been analyzed, this final section of my theory chapter will present how these concepts can be synthesized to bring about transformation. First, the Kingdom links to the holistic mission. Cray (1999, p.28) indicated that God's reign cannot be limited to the inner reign in hearts of believers but over all things. He has sovereignty over all aspects of human affairs, life and the world. Therefore, mission is about "proclaiming Jesus and His Kingdom to call for people's response" in all areas of life (Cray 1999, p.28). Moreover, the Kingdom means "dynamic rule or strength" and "reign, not realm" (Cray, 1999, p.29). The Kingdom reigns by the spread of its dynamic power rather than by geographical reign. Therefore, mission does not only include the proclamation of the Kingdom's presence but also the effective demonstration of its power. In the Kingdom, "the blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor"<sup>21</sup>. This means that the Kingdom has a power to reign over every destructed aspect of humans.

Furthermore, it can be seen that the Kingdom presents a foundation of three streams of mission: evangelism, social action and renewal in the Spirit (Samuel & Sugden, 1999, p.11). God's reign is already among believers and will be fulfilled when Christ returns. Focusing on this central message of Jesus can unite and empower the church in doing its holistic mission. Being aware of the importance of the Kingdom's good news, the church is able to give God's healing to the lost and broken world. Samuel and Sugden (1999, p.12) used this understanding of Kingdom to point out some recommendations for doing mission. The Kingdom reminds people of the interrelated relationship between the proclamation of the words of God and social transformation in the dependence of the Spirit. The Kingdom remind people of what Jesus' central message includes and how to present it in the way of Jesus. It reminds followers about the challenges from Satan and its evil forces in social systems. The Kingdom is a reminder of

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<sup>21</sup> Luke 7:22

love for serving the others and witnessing to the Kingdom in all social affairs. The Kingdom concept reminds Christians of seeking both personal and social transformation when praying for “Your Kingdom come”.

Additionally, Kirk (1999, p.37) emphasized three important points in relation to the Kingdom concept to the church’ mission. First, the world [human beings] is created by God and is subjected to His transformation to a new creation. Second, social action “is not to be equated” with Jesus’ salvation. Meanwhile, social action is not “something of a completely different order” as the Kingdom is about transforming all aspects of life, both internal and external, both personal and social. Finally, mission is about widening the Kingdom – moving the majority of humans from being untouched by the Gospel to believing in the Gospel and obeying God.

Relating the Kingdom to church’s mission, Ahonen (2000, p.146) pointed out that mission does not refer to church’s activities but rather refers to the nature of the church. “The church exists by mission, just as a fire exists by burning” (Brunner, quoted in Ahonen 2000, p.146). There is a relationship among the church, the world and the Kingdom of God. The relationship between the church and the world is often misinterpreted as “mutually exclusive” or “completely identified” (Ahonen 2000, p.146). Mutually exclusive regards the world as sinful and being the enemy of God. Hence, contact with the world and being responsible for its transformation are not necessary. Completely identified regards the world as God’s sphere of operations and God’s atoning love. Sins are almost forgotten. Meanwhile, Ahonen (2000, p.147) asserted that the relationship between the church and the world must be seen as tension between creation and redemption, general and special revelation, law and the Gospel. God created the world “beautifully and perfectly in His goodness” (Ahonen 2000, p.147). Every human has conscience and ability to distinguish between right and wrong due to God’s general revelation. God’s law of life is for the existence and sustainability of the world. On the other hand, God saves the world only through the Gospel. Humans find salvation through faith in Christ due to God’s special revelation. It is “direct fellowship between God and human beings is possible only in Christ through the Holy Spirit”<sup>22</sup>.

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22 In Church and Justification 1993, quoted in Ahonen (2000, p. 147)

### 3.3. Summary

In conclusion, the *Missio Dei* concept guides mission back to its origin: God's calling. There are different interpretations of this concept leading to a split in mission. Evangelical tradition interprets salvation as forgiveness of sins while Ecumenical tradition interprets salvation as renewal of life when talking about salvation. Evangelistic tradition emphasizes verbal proclamation of the Gospel while Ecumenical tradition emphasizes social action for justice and mercy. The difference in these two traditions lead to many disputes. Indeed, they both contribute towards the holistic mission. The Social Gospel reminds Evangelism of social concern as one aspect of mission and Evangelism reminds the Social Gospel to refer to Christ in every action. Hence, holistic mission recognizes both traditions and encourage Christians to do mission in all aspects of life, spiritual, physical and social.

Mission as transformation is one of the dimensions of holistic mission. As defined in the 1983 Wheaton Conference, "transformation is the change in which people are able to enjoy fullness of life in harmony with God...enabling them to respond with love toward God and towards others and making them new creatures in Christ". Here, mission as transformation covers both Evangelism and the Social Gospel as it aims to bring transformation to individuals and then to the society. There are several characteristics of mission as transformation such as "freedom and power" and "emphasis on change and hope". The role of the Holy Spirit is vital in transformation as it equips and empowers missionaries in the mission. Together with mission as transformation, the Kingdom of God is also a central concept of contemporary missiology. Characteristics of the Kingdom such as "the already" and "the not yet", role of the Spirit and the demand for people's response to enter and expand the Kingdom help followers to gain more understanding of mission for better practice.





## 4. METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I am going to present the research methodology. I will describe the methods used for collecting and analyzing research material and justify my choices. Moreover, I will reflect on quality, ethics and potential weaknesses of the thesis when applying these selected methods.

### 4.1. The research and its characteristics

#### 4.1.1. Research strategy

This thesis applies qualitative social research strategy. To defend this choice, I will discuss the role of the theory, epistemological and ontological positions of my research. I expect a dialogue between the theory and the findings as I can see that there is no clear separation between deductive and inductive approach in practice. The thesis is to consider the consistency of the theory with the findings. It is also expected that there will be deviations from the theory and the findings' contribution towards the existing theory. Moreover, according to Bryman 2012, p.380), interpretivist epistemology focuses on “the understanding of the social world through an examination of the interpretation of that world by its participants”. Therefore, in the thesis, I interpret how the participants experience transformation in their own situations and how they understand it in their own perspectives. Additionally, constructionist ontology suggests that “social properties are outcomes of the interactions between individuals” (Bryman 2012, p.380). My research investigates how social reality of transformation is dependent on social actors. It puts emphasis on considering the social world as a product of social interactions among pastors, workers and drug addicts. Based on the role of theory in my research, interpretivist epistemology and in constructionist ontology discussed above, qualitative research has been selected as the best approach.

#### 4.1.2. Research design and research method

##### 4.1.2.1. Research design

The research design of case study is utilized as a framework for collecting and analyzing data in the thesis. The case study goes to analyze a single case in detail and intensively. It focuses on explaining unique features of the case (Bryman, 2012, p.71). I selected two representative

Christian rehabilitation clinics, one is in Hanoi – the capital of Vietnam and another is in Thai Binh – the oldest clinic opened in the North of Vietnam. They are both organized under a broad management of the Full Gospel denomination. Additionally, according to Bryman (2012, p.69), a cross-sectional design is used when the case itself “is not the apparent object of interest and it is little more than a location that forms a backdrop to the findings”. Nevertheless, although I select two clinics in two different locations, I preferred to choose case study design. First, location is not a unit of the research. Instead, the Christian rehabilitation program in Vietnam is the subject of my inquiry. Putting focus on the program regardless of which clinic helped in providing data for detailed and intensive analysis. Second, although the clinics were in different locations, they belonged to one denomination and have similar organizations. They may have slight differences as being administrated by different pastors, but I believe these administrative differences do not have much influence on my research. Hence, comparisons between these clinics are unnecessary and are supposed to be out of my research’s scope as presented in the introduction chapter. Rather, differences between pastors’ perspectives are compared and discussed as it is related to the understanding of transformation in order to answer the research question.

#### ***4.1.2.2. Interview***

Interview is the main research methodology. This method helps to obtain subjects’ point of view and provides insight into what they see as relevant and important (Bryman, 2012, p.470). To get a nuanced understanding of the transformation concept, the participants of the study are divided into three groups. On the side of promoting transformation, there are pastors and workers. On the side of experiencing the transformation, there are drug addicts or the clients. Two pastors, two workers and two clients were interviewed in each clinic. Consequently, there are twelve interviewees in total. In the Hanoi clinic, my pastor and I had a private time to interview each of them in a small room. Leaving Hanoi, the three pastors and I took a taxi driving more than 100 kilometers to Thai Binh province. I also interviewed the people there one by one in a private room and in the presence of my pastor.

Moreover, it is the semi-structured interview which allows me to ask additionally questions during the course of interviews (Bryman 2012, p.212). With the semi-structured interview, I expected some deviations. I am quite free to elaborate on the responses. Semi-structure interviews often come up with “rich and detailed answers” and are directed to what interviewees regard as important and relevant (Bryman, 2012, p.471). The overall structure of the interview

guide and interview questions emphasized how the interviewees understand and experience transformation. Consequently, data getting from interviews are open ended, flexible and being structured for answers for the research question.

Transcription for the twelve interviews is quite challenging and time-consuming. Except for Loan, all the interviews were conducted in Vietnamese. First, I transcribed the interviews in Vietnamese according to my recordings and my scratch notes. These methods help me correct limited memory and focus more on the interviews itself rather than taking full notes. Later, I made translation from Vietnamese into English before organizing them in the findings chapter. Consequently, my work on transcribing Vietnamese to English took twice as much time compared to the amount of time used to transcribe interviews that were conducted exclusively in English.

#### ***4.1.2.3. Participant observation***

Additionally, participant observation is combined with the primary interview research method. Staying in the two clinics for two weeks gave me the opportunity to observe how the clinics are organized, how the program runs and the activities of drug addicts in the clinics on a daily basis. In other words, I spent time with my interviewees in their context. I also joined worship services and Bible study classes in the clinics. This adds information in what the interviewees said to me later and gives me some general knowledge about the program before I conducted the interviews. Overall, participant observation was not the main research method used for my data collection, rather it contributed to establishing rapport so that the interviews could go smoothly and efficiently. Therefore, I have not documented much about my participant observation in the findings chapter, but including it in my analysis of data collection because “not just what people say but also in the way that they say it is interested” (Bryman 2012, p.482).

#### **4.1.3. Relate the method to the research question**

As stated above, the Christian rehabilitation program do not use any medication but the notion of transformation. Moreover, the research question is about how transformation is defined and experienced. The research thereby should not be quantitative. Rather, transformation experienced in drug rehabilitation process will be understood from perspectives of the people involved. I chose a qualitative approach because it aims to understand the social context, describe human behavior and explain relationships (Bryman, 2012, p.7). Additionally,

interview was the main method chosen because transformation is about personal understanding and personal experience. Participant observation is the supplement method to what is said in the interviews. Through interviews and participant observation, the interviewees including pastors, workers and drug addicts were expected to express their perspectives in order to provide answers for the research question.

It is expected that social researchers “should be value free and objective in their research (Bryman, 2012, p.39). Nevertheless, he stated that “it is not feasible to keep the values that a researcher holds totally in check”. The solution for this problem is “recognize and acknowledge that research cannot be value free but to ensure that there is no untrammelled incursion of values in the research process” (p.39). Therefore, I put high value in maintaining objectivity in this thesis as far as possible. On the other hand, I am aware that at some points, bias and the intrusion of my values can occur. I have faith in God and hold a Christian perspective. I already have some Christian knowledge about the Bible, the Holy Spirit, transformation and deliverance. Consequently, it is easy for me to get into the conversation on these topics with the interviewees as they are also Christians. To overcome this, I try to give short explanations in footnotes so that non-Christian readers can easily follow the interviews. Additionally, I have heard about Christian rehabilitation program and its transformation method. I have sympathy towards drug addicts who are controlled by drugs. I also have affection towards pastors and workers who dedicate their life to God to serve in this challenging ministry. However, instead of simply acknowledging what is happening in the clinics, I chose to investigate it through the lens of an independent researcher to keep necessary distance needed for the social research. Therefore, I went back to Vietnam to collect data through many interviews and participant observation. I believe adhering to qualitative research methodology was a tool to help me overcome the bias I might sometimes have. By taking notice of the potential bias of my Christian position and my attempt to control and minimize its influence on the objectivity of the thesis, I contribute to the thesis’ confirmability. Along with credibility, transferability and dependability, it increases the trustworthiness of my thesis (Bryman 2012, p.49).

According to Bryman (2012, p.39), practical considerations influence social research in addition to role of theory, epistemological consideration, ontological consideration and researcher’s values which I have been mentioned above. Practically, the topic of transformation in Christian rehabilitation programs is considered as sensitive and almost all clients in the clinics are male. However, the transformation method is rarely used and heard of in the era of

medicine development. Therefore, personal interest and curiosity about how drug addicts are rehabilitated through transformation method motivated me to conduct the research. I asked Pastor Minh, who is my pastor in Oslo to come back to Vietnam with me. Through his relationship with the pastors in the clinics and his presence in the interviews, I get more comfort to focus on finding conclusions for my research. Importantly, his presence aims to give me necessary security so that I am not alone with drug addicts as a young lady. His role is to sit down with me while not getting involved in the interviews.

#### **4.2. Selection of informants and formulate the interview guide**

The sampling is purposive to solve my research question about transformation in the Christian rehabilitation program in Vietnam. Sampling involves selection of context and participants. I chose the North of Vietnam as the context because I have Vietnamese background, connection to pastors in the North although I live in the South; and the Christian rehabilitation program is gaining good reputation especially in the North. The program is recognized by the government for helping drug addicts become good citizens and hence, bringing positive influence on the society. Pastors in the clinics are often invited and participate in conferences and programs which aim to find effective solutions for social vices in the North. Additionally, there is the ease of practical consideration. My pastor has connection with the clinic in Thai Binh province. Moreover, head of the Thai Binh clinic has connection with Hanoi clinic which is only 100 kilometers away from Thai Binh province. Hence, I select these two rehabilitation clinics as they meet my criteria of being Christian ones, located in the North, using transformation method for drug rehabilitation and the ease of practical consideration as discussed above.

I also apply purposive and criterion sampling when selecting participants. For pastors, I chose the ones who are founders and leaders of the clinics so that I could obtain more authentic answers to the questions about clinics' establishment and manifesto. For workers, I chose the ones who have been serving in the clinics for at least five years and being key staff of the two pastors because they would have more insights and practical experience on working for transformation. For drug addicts, I chose to collect data from those who have spent from several months to several years in the program to reflect the understanding and experience on transformation more comprehensively.

Three groups of interviewees also contribute different angles to four corresponding sub-topics. Firstly, experience of transformation of Group Three is direct experience as drug addicts are

expected to experience transformation in their drug rehabilitation process. On the other hand, experience of transformation of Group One and Two is indirect one as pastors and workers are supposed to observe transformation via its signals coming from Group Three. Secondly, understanding of transformation is acquired by Group Three through their personal experiences. While for Group One and Two, they gain the understanding through life stories of drug addicts they have helped in addition to their personal lives. Thirdly, three groups will express their opinions about the most important factors contributing to drug rehabilitation. Finally, Group Three will evaluate their current states while Group One and Two will evaluate the program as a whole.

Under the category of purposive sampling, my selection involves both opportunistic and snowball sampling (Bryman 2012, p.419). First, as mentioned in the introduction chapter, I met Pastor Tam when he visited my Pastor in Oslo. I used the opportunity to collect data for the research from Pastor Tam's contacts in Vietnam. Therefore, the sampling was opportunistic in nature. Second, it is a snowball sample. From the contact with Pastor Tam, I was referred to Pastor Cam and his clinic in Thai Binh province. This is the first Christian rehabilitation clinic established in the North. Later, Pastor Cam introduced me to Pastor Sy who was his teacher. Consequently, I was introduced to Pastor Sy and his clinic in Hanoi.

As stated above, the interviews were conducted according to the interview guide. The interview guide was formulated around my research sub-questions. Additionally, questions involving motivation for participation, goals and evaluation of the program were included to provide more insights into the program.

### **4.3. Method for analyzing the material**

After collecting the data from interviews and participant observation, I transcribed and translated them. Although it takes time to do both, it helped me structure and organize the data better because I had to go over the interviews many times. I transcribed all the interviews in their entirety and coded the data by subject matter. As my interview guide was based on research sub-questions, the interviews flow in a similar pattern. Therefore, I was able to put subjects such as "motivations", "definition of transformation" and "experience" for each interview although the interviews were open ended (Bryman 2012, p.568). I found the open coding helpful as codes form a consistent framework which simplifies and identifies patterns

of the data. Consequently, I could efficiently link data gained from interviews and respond to the research question and relevant theories.

#### **4.4. Research ethics**

Ethical issues in social research relate to how the researcher should treat the subjects of their studies (Bryman 2012, p.130). Ethical issues were taken into consideration to minimize any potential of negative consequences for the informants, work of the Christian rehabilitation program in the Vietnam as the whole and other related parties. Ethics in the interview process requires informed consent. I had contacted Pastor Cam and Pastor Sy before I visited Vietnam to conduct interviews. I prepared the information letter and sent it to them via email. In the letter, I present background, purpose of my research and my plan on how to conduct the interviews in Vietnam. I also confirm that participation is voluntary and they have all freedom to participate or withdraw. For workers and drug addicts, the information had been given orally by the pastors before I came. Moreover, I introduced myself and explained the purpose of my research before I initiated each interview.

Second, drug addiction is a sensitive issue and drug addicts are a vulnerable group. Therefore, their private information should be treated confidentially. I talked to the pastors and workers about confidentiality regarding names and personal information which might make it possible to identify individuals. The pastors and workers are open about this issue and they prefer to use their real names. There are two reasons explain for this response. First, they have already disclosed their names in evangelistic events among the surrounding communities. Hence, it is unnecessary to hide their names. Second, they have a desire to expand the clinics and let more people know about the program. Consequently, I use real names of pastors and workers. Regarding to the drug addicts, they have the same response when I mentioned keeping their names and other identifying information confidential. They expressed that they want to share their testimonies and have no concern about disclosure of their names. However, I intentionally kept the privacy for drug addicts. Unlike pastors and workers who were rehabilitated and actively serving in the clinics, the addicts are still in the process of rehabilitation. Disclosure of their names may bring some negative influence on their life later on. Hence, I chose to anonymize names of the drug addicts and used aliases.

## 4.5. Questions about quality of the research

### 4.5.1. Reliability and validity

According to Bryman (2012, p.46 and p.389), reliability and validity are two important criteria for establishing and evaluating quality of a social research.

External reliability is assessed based on “the degree to which a study can be replicated” (Bryman 2012, p.390). This is considered as the most challenging criterion for qualitative social research because it emphasizes being to replicate a particular social setting and circumstance. I believe this concern is not the case for my research. If a researcher does the same research on the Christian rehabilitation program in Vietnam, he or she could reach similar conclusions as mine. Nevertheless, the degree on which Christian rehabilitation programs depend on faith may affect the results. In fact, there are many faith-based rehabilitation programs which rely on faith to different degrees. They may be one hundred percent based on faith or may incorporate extra support from medication. Therefore, external validity is reached only when a researcher conducts a research on Christian rehabilitation programs in Vietnam which are absolute faith-based. As long as this condition is maintained, the consistency of my research is maintained. Additionally, internal reliability is assessed based on the fact that if the research is conducted by a team, members of the team “agree about what they see and hear” (Bryman 2012, p.390). Although I hold Christian perspective, my research is based on interviews and participant observation. Hence, I believe that other researchers agree with what I have seen and experienced on drug addicts’ rehabilitation taking place in the clinics.

Internal validity is gained if there is a good match between data and conclusions. This criterion is highly achieved in qualitative social research. Data I collected from interviews and participant observation are open ended while following the interview guide formulated based on the research question. They hence provide a foundation and guidance to build up my conclusions which also aims to answer the research question. Consequently, a good match between data and conclusions appears obvious. External validity is about “the degree to which findings can be generalized across social settings” (Bryman 2012, p.390). As presented above, the findings I obtained can be generalized across locations. In my research, social settings should not specifically be emphasized. Rather, I am aware that the culture of the context is relevant to any social research, but I am not going to focus on it in my thesis. Therefore, I expect the research to be generalized across locations as long as the settings are in Vietnam and relating



to the Vietnamese culture. Moreover, condition regarding one hundred percent faith-based Christian rehabilitation method is essential to maintain external validity of the research.

#### 4.5.2. Trustworthiness and authenticity

Moreover, there are two other criteria to specifically evaluate qualitative research: trustworthiness and authenticity (Bryman 2012, p.390). Trustworthiness comprises four sub-criteria. First, I apply triangulation by using more than one research method and source of data to gain credibility which contributes to internal validity discussed above. I conduct both interview and participant observation. Although I put emphasis on interview, conducting two methods helps to increase confidence in findings. Participant observation confirms what I heard from the interviews. In return, the interviews confirm what I saw in the observation. For the source of theory, I consider both Biblical and social literature materials.

Second, transferability is parallel to external validity. Nevertheless, transferability accepts the fact that qualitative findings may have certain characteristics and contextual uniqueness. It encourages these researchers giving “rich accounts of the details” (Bryman 2012, p.392). As stated above, my research does not have contextual uniqueness while there are some requirements on certain characteristics of the Christian rehabilitation program to maintain the external validity. Therefore, I aim to build a rich detailed analysis of this particular rehabilitation program although I believe that it can be transferred to other contexts within the Vietnamese culture. Third, keeping records of all research procedures from formulating research question and sub-questions to drawing conclusions helps to increase dependability of the research. Fourth, confirmability is gained by disclosing my Christian belief and showing that I “have not overly allowed personal values to sway the conduct of the research and the findings deriving from it” (Bryman 2012, p.392). Additionally, authenticity concerns about political impact of the research. In my research, I keep fairness to maintain the authenticity. My thesis reflects data obtained from what the interviewees said in the interviews and from my participation in the context of participant observation. Particularly, different viewpoints of pastors, workers and drug addicts are fairly presented in the thesis. My main contribution here in the thesis is the way I organize the data collected and draw conclusions based on the data. By doing so, I believe I have gained authenticity by genuinely and sincerely reflecting the data collected.

In general, I have presented methodology of the research and justified my choices. I chose to conduct qualitative social research. Specifically, the research is a case study using interview and participant observation methods aiming to find answers for my research question. These choices with their justifications give foundation for maintaining quality and ethics of the research. In the next chapter, I will present my process of collecting and analyzing data and applying methods mentioned in this chapter.



## 5. PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS

The purpose of this chapter is to present empirical findings collected from interviews with twelve interviewees and participant observation in the two Christian rehabilitation clinics in Vietnam. The data are expected to form foundation for answering the question about how transformation is understood and experienced as a means of delivering drug addicts from addiction under the perspectives of pastors, clinic workers and drug addicts. As mentioned in the introduction chapter, Group One are the pastors, Group Two are the workers and Group Three are the drug addicts and sometimes are called clients. Group One and Two are promoting and working towards transformation while Group Three are subjects of receiving and experiencing the transformation for drug rehabilitation.

In the thesis, I call drug addicts who receive support from pastors and workers in the rehabilitation clinics as “clients” and “drug addicts”. However, there is a Vietnamese proverb called “nor or half word if also teacher”. As pastors and workers are teaching drug addicts the Bible and other life skills, they often use the term “pupils” to refer to the drug addicts. This term is thereby used by the interviewees. Moreover, the clinic in Thai Binh is for male drug addicts only and therefore, the word “he” is used to describe drug addicts. While the clinic in Hanoi is for both male and female drug addicts and therefore, the word “he/she” is used. Moreover, since the program applies transformation as its rehabilitation method, the interviewees’ perspectives on transformation process and the program itself are usually interrelated, especially for the interview question of evaluation of the transformation process. Likewise, rehabilitation process and transformation process are considered as similar and might take place simultaneously according to the interviewees.

### 5.1. Participant observation

In September 2016, I accompanied three pastors to northern Vietnam to visit two Christian rehabilitation clinics. Our group went across the North of Vietnam, starting from Hanoi and continued south within three weeks. The goal of the trip is mainly to observe and interview people in the clinics. Besides, the pastors visited some churches to teach the Bible and encourage the Christians living there.

Our first destination was Hanoi. We spent four days under the schedule of Pastor Sy. Throughout four days, he guided us to visit and experience many activities of his clinic. We attended the worship services and joined Bible teaching classes. All drug addicts were asked to join the worship service in the clinic. They sang, prayed and listened to sermons together. I observed that they looked healthy, raising hands when singing worship songs and paid attention to the sermons. The pastors told me that as they are in recovery stage, their health are good. While addicts who are in the detox stage are taken care of by workers in separate rooms.

Specifically, the two individual workers who were former drug addicts seemed to articulate their responses to my interview questions in a more concise, formal, and reflective manner. Meanwhile, interviews with the two drug addicts who were actively receiving treatment at the facility tended to be longer as they gave much detail about their drug rehabilitation process. I was free to take my time for the interviews without any rush from Pastor Sy. Each interview took about thirty minutes to one hour. However, the last interviewee Loan and I were a bit tired after many hours spent for participating the clinic's activities. Therefore, we went through the questions more quickly than the others. Moreover, Loan has been in the clinic for only eight months and her health was not good enough to attend a long interview like the others.

Similar to being in Hanoi, we attended the worship services and visited drug addicts before conducting interviews in the two-day visit in Thai Binh clinic. In the worship services, they were instructed to sing and pray together. Moreover, some addicts gave testimonies in the worship services. The pastors told me that these testimonies encourage and give hope to the newcomers to experience the deliverance from drugs. It took me the whole afternoon until midnight to finish all the interviews. Interviewees sat outside and were patient about waiting for their turn. Each interview lasted for thirty minutes to one hour. Similar to the Hanoi clinic, interviews with drug addicts were longer than those with pastors and workers as it took more time for drug addicts to tell about their life story.

The interviews are conducted as the following:

- Hanoi clinic: interviewed Pastor Sy, clinic workers Viet and Dung, and drug addicts Thai, Son, and Loan on 16 September 2016.
- Thai Binh clinic: interviewed Pastor Cam, clinic workers Tuan Anh and Ha, and drug addicts Giang, Tu, and Bang on 22 September 2016.

## 5.2. Findings from interviews with pastors and clinic workers

### 5.2.1. Interviews with pastors

Two pastors leading clinics in Hanoi and Thai Binh were interviewed. Pastor Sy is the teacher of Pastor Cam in Thai Binh. He started the deliverance ministry in 1996 in Saigon. He lives in the South but expanding the deliverance ministry to the North. Pastor Cam visited Pastor Sy's clinics and used it as a model for the clinic in Thai Binh.

#### 5.2.1.1. *Factors and motivations leading to the participation*

Pastor Sy was born into a Christian family but was addicted to drugs before he was freed in 1986. He shared that he almost died from a drug overdose, and that he was touched and saved by God. Ten years after being delivered from drugs, he founded the deliverance ministry in Vietnam in 1996. He explained:

It was challenging in the first five years of the ministry. I went to parks and hospitals to find drug addicts. Most of them suffered from HIV. I gathered them and taught them the Bible. They received Jesus and committed their life to God. But several months later, they went to the heaven. I was disappointed because people participated the program, being saved and died. It seemed God tested me to see if I loved them like God loved and accepted me. Additionally, my marriage was in danger as I used most of my time going out and taking care of drug addicts.

Nevertheless, the Holy Spirit comforted me, awakened me and confirmed the calling. God let me know He saved me ten years ago to prepare for the ministry in which I would help people who were addicted like me. God reminded me "What is impossible with man is possible with God"<sup>23</sup>. I proclaim that words and cast out sickness, addictions and evil spirits in drug addicts' life. Thanks God that He has transformed many addicts and healed many diseases such as hepatitis C and lung cancer. By His miracles, some addicts who suffer from HIV could live for 15 to 20 years more.

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23 Luke 18:27

Unlike Pastor Sy, Pastor Cam is not former drug addict but his family members are. He told me his motivations:

First, it is about the calling of God (...) Second, it is about the love of God for drug addicts who are young and suffer too much. Addictions lead to many problems, not only for that person but also for family and the society. If God's love can transform life of drug addicts, it can also bring blessings to their surrounding people. There is nothing too hard for God. He can deliver, heal and free all people. His ministry includes both preaching the Gospel and doing good deeds, helping to solve social problems. Jesus came to bring peace and happiness to this world. I have a deep love for drug addicts and then their families. My family had drug addicts so I understand that the addicts and their families are miserable. I have a burden in my heart about the addicts starting from love and sympathy towards them.

#### ***5.2.1.2. Goals of the program***

Pastor Sy continued to say when being asked about goals of the program:

I have a vision "God transforms drug addicts" (...) I heard the news on how many people died from drugs or overdosed on the media almost daily. They did not know God and died without receiving salvation. God showed me this was both a challenge for the church and a door for evangelism in the North. People now mention about the deliverance ministry when talking about Christian booming and evangelism for Christianity expansion in the North.

Pastor Cam shared shortly about the goals. According to him, the first goal is to deliver drug addicts away from drugs through transformation as mentioned in Ephesians 4:22-24<sup>24</sup>. The final goal is to make them become disciples of God as stated in Matthew 28:19-20<sup>25</sup>. He emphasized that "they must be delivered and freed. They must be out of the control of everything, from drugs to cigarettes, alcohol and sex addictions".

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<sup>24</sup> You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; <sup>23</sup> to be made new in the attitude of your minds; <sup>24</sup> and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

<sup>25</sup> Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you

Being asked about the requirement of receiving Jesus as a goal of the program, Pastor Cam continued to say:

...only God could deliver the addicts. We [pastors and workers] do not require but give advice [evangelize] to drug addicts. We let them know there is the way to deliver them from drugs – Jesus. Jesus has power to free them from drugs. We do not force them to believe but show them the solution for their addiction. Usually after hearing this good news, they believe Jesus. Some people have a hard heart. We do not force them but if they are not ready to believe, we let them be back home. We always express love towards them and confirm God's love on their life. There is the way, always available to them whenever they decide to come back.

Pastor Sy then explained further about his process of receiving clients:

We open for all addicts. Normally, there are two ways leading to addicts' participation. First, my workers are assigned to approach drug addicts when I have their contacts or being asked by their family. Addicts are often convinced by testimonies and counsels of people who used to be in the same circumstance like them. Second, addicts who do not receive Jesus but when they live in the clinic, they decide to receive. They see and feel loved, cared and helped from the workers. The workers sometimes bathe drug addicts in the detox stage. These acts touch the addicts. Therefore, receiving Jesus is not a must to join the program. Like in the second case, addicts come here to experience and to be transformed. But to be rehabilitated, they must receive God and surrender to God.

### ***5.2.1.3. Signals of being transformed***

Pastor Cam briefly described the signals of being transformed according to the Bible. "A transformed and matured Christian bears fruits like a fruit tree bears fruits. These are fruits of the Spirit including love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control <sup>26</sup> written in the Bible", he said. In addition, Pastor Sy explained:

A pupil firstly starts to like to read the Bible and listen to Christian songs. In worship services, he/she is touched by God and cries for His mercy. He/she has a life of prayer and says no more slang. Moreover, drug addicts are selfish and live for themselves. When

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<sup>26</sup> Galatians 5:22



being transformed, they start to live for the others. Transformation can be recognized through their eyes, their words and their attitudes.

#### ***5.2.1.4. Understanding of transformation***

After pointing out signals of transformation, Pastor Sy expressed his understanding of transformation:

It is written in 2 Corinthians 5:12 “if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here”. It is transformation. I prefer a statement: the power of the Holy Spirit is to transform a wolf to a sheep. Drug addicts are wolves in their nature. By the words written in the Bible, God transforms them to His sheep.

Meanwhile, Pastor Cam referred to transformation as a metamorphosis process:

Transformation is the process of transforming from a caterpillar – the old to a butterfly – the new. God gradually transforms people’s soul which include the mind, the will and the emotions. New soul leads to new thoughts and new words. It is not medication but the power of God, to re-create and re-born us. Only in Christ, people are re-born as written in 2 Corinthians 5:17.

#### ***5.2.1.5. Role of the 16 rules and key factors contributing to drug rehabilitation***

Similar to any other rehabilitation programs, the Christian program uses rules<sup>27</sup> to structure healthy daily routines for drug addicts. Pastor Sy explained the role of these rules in the transformation process:

Shackles and prison cells cannot transform people. Only the power in the name of Jesus, the power of the Bible, Jesus’ blood and the Holy Spirit can. Only God’s great love can transform and conquer their hearts (...) Of course we have rules so that their time will be arranged properly to learn the Bible and form a healthy lifestyle. We discipline them in love and according to the words written in the Bible. It is different.

Commenting about the 16 rules, Pastor Cam confirmed that the motivation is love, not law. He explained that “the rules are a tool to help all people live well together. Drug addicts are quite

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<sup>27</sup> The 16 rules are translated into English by myself and presented in Appendix

undisciplined and the rules form disciplined routines for them. God is the God of order”. Instead, Pastor Cam emphasized important factors contributing to drug rehabilitation:

The main contributors are God and His words. Drug addicts must also desire to be transformed. When they put their faith in Christ, they must meditate and learn the Bible to experience transformation. I also learn from Jesus that He wins souls by love. So do we. We show love to drug addicts. They are massaged in the detox stage. More than that, we take care of them, support them in daily routines and pray for them. As many drug addicts said to me, this is totally different to other clinics. Here is like a family. Their family denied them, the society denied them. But here, they are accepted by God and workers. This creates hope in life. This creates them a faith, let them know that they are valuable. They are not left out and useless.

#### ***5.2.1.6. Evaluation of the transformation process***

Finally, I asked the pastors to evaluate and give final comments on the program. As stated in the introduction chapter, I am not going to obtain statistics on success rate of the program. Instead, I asked them for the evaluations of the program to gain better understanding of transformation. Pastor Sy said:

God delivers people in different ways through common factors: love and power of God. Some people experienced transformation after only ten days. Others were three months, one years or three years. We learn to be patient so that we value more the transforming power of God for each drug addict. Compared to other kinds of rehabilitation, we have a higher rate of success which means low rate of relapse. But not all pupils join the program are delivered. In Jesus’ ministry, He did not heal all the sick but only people who needed Him and ran to Him were healed. Similarly, if pupils are not humble and open their hearts to God, God cannot help them. (...) Some pupils went home and relapsed until the third time or fourth when they opened their hearts to God. Then God touched their life and transformed them.

Pastor Cam also gave an overall evaluation of the program:

The program lasts for two years. It is not about the time but about experience of transformation. Many drug addicts went through the program but the program did not “go

through” them. The importance is that the program must go through them and they are transformed. Two-year period is a milestone in the process. Some people are transformed before and others are transformed after that two-year.

I make general statistics every year. The clinic has been opened for more than ten years and each year ten to twenty drug addicts are delivered. (...) The number of clients participating tells a little. It depends on our capacity of facilities and staff to receive them. It depends on their personal circumstances. They may leave the program because they do not have enough desire to be delivered or they are busy with family and other concerns. Addicts who left the program often relapse. Addicts who finish program often has a nearly 100% rate of success which means they are delivered and do not relapse.

### **5.2.2. Interviews with clinic workers**

Four clinic workers were interviewed, two for each clinic. Four of them were former drug addicts, participated in the program, and decided to stay in the clinics to help other drug addicts. Each of them are currently assigned and committed to take care of nearly twenty drug addicts. As a leader, one is responsible for nearly twenty drug addicts. They administer all activities of the addicts and the clinic. They also supervise the status of each addict to find different solutions for different cases based on their personal experience and years of supporting drug addicts in the clinics. They receive counselling from pastors as needed. Viet and Dung have served as clinic workers in Hanoi clinic for more than five years. While Tuan Anh and Ha have served in Thai Binh clinic for nearly ten years.

#### ***5.2.2.1. Factors and motivations leading to the participation***

Finishing the two-year program, these former drug addicts stayed in the clinic for one more year to study more about the Bible and sought for God’s calling. Viet said it was privilege for him to be called and serve God, helping people who are addicted like he had been before. “I commit my life to show my gratitude for God’s deliverance from drugs”, he said. While Viet stayed in the clinic for three years until he experienced the calling, Dung shared that he had experienced the calling after he had been in the rehabilitation program for four months. He explains that the calling had been confirmed step by step until he finished the program. In Thai Binh clinic, both worker Tuan Anh and worker Ha said that they decide to work in the clinic because of God’s love on their lives and to express their gratitude to God.

### ***5.2.2.2. Goals of the program***

Similar to the pastors, clinic workers were asked about goals of the program, their overviews and insights about the program. Viet emphasized that understanding of the Bible is the main goal set for all pupils. He stated:

...study the Bible is very important and a must because through the understanding of the words written in the Bible, God help people overcome temptations and trials that everyone has to face all of the time. Time spending to study the Bible will help them not only when they are in the clinic but later, when they finish the program and being back to their family and reintegrate into the community.

Tuan Anh shared about what he felt were the two main goals of the program:

Short-term goal is to let them meet God. The touch of God's love and encounter with God are able to keep their spirit and soul whether they leave the clinic early or on time and wherever they will be. They will remember what God has done on their lives. Long-term goal is to fulfill the vision: opening rehabilitation clinics in all 64 provinces of Vietnam. All workers contribute to this vision, either going out to open the new ones or staying in the clinic to help the pupils as in my case.

Telling about the overall goal of the program, Ha stated: "Jesus came to the world to proclaim the Gospel and save people. Our ultimate goal is to bring and proclaim the Gospel to save drug addicts".

### ***5.2.2.3. Signals of being transformed***

The differences between the before and after transformation of the pupils are huge, Viet said. Dung then emphasized "the response of pupils to the Bible...this is an important signal indicating they have been transformed and they put God in their heart".

Tuan Anh specifically explained how one can notice if a client has experienced a transformation:

Transformation can be observed. If a person has been transformed, others can clearly see the difference in his life before and after he received God. I have worked here for many

years so I know which signals are self-efforts to express himself as a good person and which signals are from transformation. When he is transformed, he will have the joy and peace. He relentlessly walks in God even though he makes mistakes (...) He is touched by God through prayers and loving God's love. So the most importance is that person must meet God and being transformed. Only when he is transformed, God will help him so that he will not turn back to the addicted life. Although he may make mistakes but it is easier for him to be changed and continue to walk in God once he met God. Some people are good by their own effort without encountering God. When temptations and problems come, they give up and leave the clinic. While transformed people often try to keep fellowship with God wherever they are.

Ha explained how transformation happens and how he can recognize the change in the addicts' demeanor:

We need to see whether they have personal relationship with God. They diligently study the Bible, pray and worship. Then they are transformed. By their fruit you will recognize them<sup>28</sup>. For example, they do not use slang and have serving spirit. They also start to adopt Christ-like lifestyle. But the most importance is the relationship with God must be shown up. If they do not connect to God, their problems cannot be solved.

#### ***5.2.2.4. Understanding of transformation***

Viet talked about his understanding of transformation:

It is similar to the name of our clinic "the Rebirth". To drug addicts, transformation is extremely meaningful. Transformation means born again. It is not about the body but the spirit and soul. Born again has a broad meaning. To understand the concept simply, a transformed person is the one who is born again from the inside and express to the outside (...) Not only for drug addicts but also for all Christians to be born again. All Christians do not only hear about Jesus but must be born again to experience the love and power of God (...). The difference here is that drug addicts experience the transformation in a more "extreme level". They suffer from miseries and hurts during their addictions. When God comes to their lives, they experience much more about love, forgiveness and mercy from

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<sup>28</sup> Matthew 7:20

Him. They often have strong experience of transformation and that is why it often brings strong persuasion towards people who hear their testimony.

Tuan Anh pointed out the importance of transformation: “If a drug addict has not been transformed, it is a failure”. Similarly, worker Ha explained how transformation is essential for drug rehabilitation in his understanding:

When they are not transformed yet, their spirits are blind. They know addiction is bad but they are still addicted (...). Transformation happens when they receive God, repent and connect to His love again [reconciled with God]. This connection leads to a transformed life. God opens their eyes. They connect to the love and power of God. They now live in a new mold formed by God.

#### ***5.2.2.5. Role of the 16 rules and key factors contributing to drug rehabilitation***

According to Viet, the 16 rules are quite similar to other rehabilitation programs. He explained:

...in governmental rehabilitation programs, there are rules to build up healthy routines such as waking and eating time. The difference is that pupils are required to follow a Bible study plan set by the clinic. Everyday every pupil must spend at least three hours to study the Bible, in the morning, afternoon and night. It can be self-study or group study. Additionally, we give many teachings on edification and trainings to help them get out of drugs, increase their understanding about Christ-like lifestyle for example.

Regarding the most important factors contributing to rehabilitation, Viet shared:

I used to be a drug addict so I know there are two important factors. First, the drug addicts must long for transformation, a born-again life and free from drugs. The longing leads to the experience of transformation. Second, they must cooperate with the clinic and fulfill all rules and trainings. Especially, they must put priority on learning the Bible. Through what is written in the Bible, they can conceive the idea of their lives and their sins so that they repent and decide to be children of God. So, they are delivered and have a new life. The words of God written in the Bible do not only release them from addiction of drugs but alcohol, games, gambling, smoking and sex. The deliverance only takes place once they have a desire for that and spend time to meditate the words written in the Bible.

Dung's statement is in agreement with Viet's about the role of drug addicts in the rehabilitation process. "They must long for the freedom, independence from drugs. They must long for the victory against drugs", he said. However, the most prerequisite factor contributing to the success in rehabilitation is learning the Bible, he emphasized.

In Thai Binh clinic, Tuan Anh strongly emphasizes on the importance of God's love over the 16 rules:

These rules are a scale [barème] on which we base to organize and help drug addicts form healthy daily habits and routines. But if we only base on these rules, we will lose. Always sticking to these rules to force them will not lead to success in rehabilitation. Pastor Cam often tells us: follow the Holy Spirit. It is about the sensitivity and flexibility to the work of the Spirit. One person we use this way; another person we apply different way which may not be written in the rules. The rules help them know what they should do but they are not able to follow in the beginning. The love of God is above all and conquers them.

According to Tuan Anh, it is the love from God that makes drug addicts changed. He continued:

The love of God is expressed towards pupils through pastors and workers. Like in my case, I broke the rules so many times and I thought I would be expelled from the clinic once I was the pupil here. But God's love is still there, still accepting my mistakes (...) Once I broke the rules and left the clinic, Pastor Cam picked me up when I decided to come back, without scolding or saying anything. I felt loved. That feeling motivated me to do something to deserve that love. Therefore, pupils need to know and feel God's love and love from surrounding people. We show love to them by many ways (...) Sometimes we need to be strict to them while sometimes we need to be soft and flexible.

Agreeing on the importance of God's love over the 16 rules, worker Ha added:

Drug addicts must understand their real values in God (...) they must know they are valuable in the eyes of God. They were rejected by their own family and the society. They lost their self-confidence, they saw themselves as waste of the society and they lived a self-indulgent and unrestrained lifestyle. Only when they come to God, they are aware of their values and started to change their lifestyle. Knowing the real value in Christ awakes

transformation in the way they see themselves (...) They need to be transformed from the inside.

But according to him, the words written in the Bible carry out transformation. He continued:

They must change the mind and form a Christ-like lifestyle according to the Bible. It is a process and learning the Bible helps the process take place. Here we form healthy routines for the pupils but learning the Bible and spirituality are the priority.

Getting their views on what are important factors contributing to drug rehabilitation, the first rule of the 16 rules is asked. It is that, drug addicts must receive Jesus as the Lord of their lives before they can participate the Christian rehabilitation program. Viet commented about this rule: “in many cases, families bring drug addicts here while the addicts do not want to. However, we are willing to help them in any cases”. Dung also commented more about this issue:

They [the pupils] know all the information about this program in the beginning. They are advised and told about the deliverance of God if they read the Bible, worship God and follow the rules of the clinic. Once they fulfill all, they will realize these requirements do not constrain them but to help them. These requirements lead them to the deliverance from drugs. So when a drug addict comes to the clinic, I often advise him “if you receive Jesus, it is easier for you to go through the rehabilitation process. You are able to learn the Bible and God will help you overcome everything”. Almost all of them agree. Some addicts receive God after living in the clinic for a while. They all have the freedom.

Ha shared his perspective on this first rule:

...If drug addicts do not believe in God, no one can help them. Like in my case, before I receive God, I had tried to rehabilitate both at home and in many governmental forced rehabilitation clinics but nothing changed. There was a statistics showing that only one percent of drug addicts does not experience drug relapse after being released from rehabilitation prisons. Because they do not have faith in God, it is impossible to be rehabilitated (...) We help drug addicts come to God and they lean on Him to be transformed. We ourselves cannot make them transformed. Nevertheless, if a drug addict



wants to stay here without receiving God, we are willing to help. As a rule, he can stay here for three months. If he still has no faith after that, we cannot help more.

#### ***5.2.2.6. Evaluation of the transformation process***

Four of the clinic workers agreed that the two-year program is the starting point. Dung affirmed that after two years, the rate of relapse into drugs is still high if they do not keep following what is written in the Bible and actively participate in the local church. Tuan Anh shared the same opinion as Dung:

It is called a success rehabilitation when a pupil finishes the two-year program and continue to walk in God. Some cases are failed as they do not keep the relationship with God and the connection with local churches when they are back home. They relapse! Some rare cases are when pupils do not finish the program but if they have connection with the local churches, they also succeed in getting out of drugs. Two years in the clinic is like a kindergarten. It is a beginning of a life freed from drugs. Drug addiction is complicated. It brings many disorders both physically and mentally to the addicts. To completely solve these issues and equip them for the life after addiction, drug addicts need a little more time.

### **5.3. Findings from interviews with drug addicts**

I conducted the interviews with six drug addicts. They have been in the clinics for different lengths of time. As drug rehabilitation is a process, the length of time spent in the clinics is an important factor to consider when analyzing their answers. In Hanoi clinic, both Thai and Son were addicted to drugs for more than ten years and have participated in the program nearly two years. Loan, the only one female interviewee has been participating in the rehabilitation program for eight months after nearly twenty years of drug and alcohol addiction in Australia. In Thai Binh clinic, Giang has been in the clinic the second time for ten months while the first time only lasted for three months. Tu finished the two-year program and is staying for one more year to continue living in the Christian environment, while Bang has been in the clinic for five months.

### 5.3.1. Factors and motivations leading to the participation

These drug addicts were asked about reasons why they participate in the program. Most of them shared that it is because the workers approached, challenged, inspired them to rely on God and participate in the program by giving their testimonies and messages. Thai mentioned, the message “Jesus loves you” made he wondered who God, whom could love him even when his family and his friends could not, really be. Giang also told about how his deep desire of getting out of drugs arose when he was asked “if you believe in God or if God is real, what will you ask for?”. Similarly, Tu heard the testimonies through an evangelistic event held in a governmental rehabilitation prison and received a Bible for himself. Consequently, they came to the Christian clinics and ask for help in rehabilitation.

In addition to the message heard, mannerisms and demeanor of these former drug addicts [workers] are important factors in persuading and getting attention of these drug addicts. Son shared:

By chance, I watched a testimony of a Christian former drug addict who had changed by Jesus on YouTube<sup>29</sup>. Three years later, I myself found the Rebirth church and the clinic of Pastor Sy. Here I met real people who had the same past like me. I was totally convinced by something different from me, reflected in their eyes, gestures and words. I also attended the worship and heard more about Jesus. I believed and received Jesus right on that day.

Moreover, family plays an important role in addicts’ decision on their participation. In Giang’s case, his mother heard the Gospel and convinced her two sons [both were addicted] to go to church. Giang’s brother went with her to a church service, talked to a clinic worker and received Jesus on that day. Giang shared that through the testimonies of his mother and brother, he decided to believe in God and join the program. In Bang’s case, his brother found, contacted and asked pastors who serve in the deliverance ministry encourage Bang and his family to receive Jesus. After three months, Bang decided to receive Jesus and come to the clinic. In Loan’s case, her mother decided to bring her to Vietnam and let her live in the Hanoi clinic.

Regardless of who heard the Gospel and knew about the program first, either the drug addicts themselves or their families, it took time for these drug addicts to finally make a decision to

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<sup>29</sup> Hien 2015

participate. The gap between receiving and responding was usually long. Son went to a nearby church in 2011 after watching the testimony on YouTube, but it wasn't until 2014 that he decided to participate in the program. For Giang, he was impressed by the transformed life of his brother. But he was struggling with going in and out among the many forced rehabilitation programs of the government in four years before he decided to try the Christian program. He said:

I decided to join the program when my heart was still hard and my mind was immature (...) I left the clinic and came back. I believed and received Jesus. I determined to follow the program. I wanted to know who God really was and how a Christian would be. I realized that when I heard about God and my mouth confessed my faith, God's rehabilitation program got started.

For Tu, he decided to join the program after one year of suffering from tuberculosis. For Bang, it took him more than three months to decide to live in the clinic after being encouraged by his brother. Hence, decision to participate belongs to the drug addicts themselves. However, Loan's case is an exception. Loan was in her drugged state and out of her consciousness for several days after an intensive drug binge when she was brought back to Vietnam by her mother.

Furthermore, all six of the interviewees were powerless against drug abuse and drug dependency. They were immune to rehabilitation. They were struggling to get out of drugs for a long time, but they failed to get out of drugs both on their own strength and in governmental rehabilitation programs. They were caught up in a cycle of rehabilitation and relapse for years even their deep desire was to get out of that circle. According to Thai:

My addiction was very heavy and I used to spend one month earning of a typical labor job in Hanoi at that time to buy one-day dosage of drugs. I was depressed and hopeless. I wanted to be delivered but the power of drug was stronger than my will. I participated in many rehabilitation programs, both voluntary and forced, both governmental and private. But under the control of drugs, my mind was only thinking of getting more drugs which were the only thing could satisfy my needs. During the struggle, I suddenly remember the statement "Jesus loves you" and the testimony of the workers. They raised the hope inside of mine. I wanted to come to the church and the Christian clinic to see how it was and hope this place could help me get out of drugs. My motivation was my desire and my hope to be rehabilitated. I did not believe in Jesus at all.

Son, who was addicted for eleven years before joining the program wanted to be free and independent from drugs, but he also went around the circle like Thai. He shared: “whenever I was in a rehabilitation program, I was obsessed and afraid of the uncomfortable feelings and even life-threatening withdrawal symptoms such as muscle aches and insomnia due to drug discontinuation. I wanted to withdraw but I felt more comfortable with drugs”.

Commenting about his own cycle of quitting and then relapsing, Tu said:

I went to the church because I had nothing to lean on. I had drug craving and felt a fire in my body right in the worship time. But thanks God for His protection; I overcame the craving a day after that. On that day, the words in the sermon touched and motivated me. It also challenged me to find a solution (...) I opened my heart to receive God and decided to join the program.

Loan also described in detail her powerless status before participating in the program:

I lost my self-confidence and thought no one loved me (...) no one needs me. I hated myself. I used drug from 18-year-old (...) now I am 39-year-old. Drugs made me feel happy and drugs were all I wanted in my life. (...) I tried every type of drugs and every way of taking drugs (...) I suffered from bipolar<sup>30</sup>. My mother lied me that she brought me to Vietnam for vacation. In the end of the day, God brought me here. He chose me to come here. Many people helped me and God brought me here thought them. My mom is a Buddhist so it was very strange that she sent me to a Christian rehabilitation clinic in Vietnam.

Going around that circle, the Gospel message and information about the Christian rehabilitation program arouse hope against their impotence and hopelessness. Some of them including Thai, Tu and Bang wanted to do something differently to change their lives and simply decided to try this program. On the other hand, Son and Giang (in his second time back to the clinic) were totally convinced and inspired when they met and heard the testimony of the former drug addicts who had participated and succeeded in the program. Either being totally convinced or wanting to take a step to try, they decided to put their faith in Jesus and participate in the program.

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<sup>30</sup> Also called “manic depression” which cause serious shifts in mood and behavior for a particular long period of time

### 5.3.2. Experience of transformation

From the desire and the hope of being delivered from drugs, these drug addicts started their own journey that was inspired by the former-addicted workers they met. As all the interviewees shared, the program had two stages. The first one was the detox stage and the second one was the recovery stage.

#### 5.3.2.1. Detox stage

In the Christian rehabilitation program, the addicts said that they experienced the power of God to release pains. Thai shared:

Drug withdrawals caused uncomfortable feelings while the use of drug helped me feel comfortable. But in this clinic, my detox stage was not that uncomfortable. It was totally different. I felt like receiving the supernatural power, very different from when I did not have God. Before, I strived myself with my own strength to detox. But here God gave me the power to overcome all the uncomfortable feelings and withdrawal syndromes easily. Of course at that time I felt the comfort and peace but did not understand why. I know it was the power of God after that, when I learn more about the Bible.

Similarly, Son shared about the different experience in drug detoxification in the Christian program compared to other programs:

Many people in the clinic prayed for me. I felt a new strength and no fear. In the clinic, I did not suffer from insomnia anymore. I felt something supernatural (...) very different from other detox times. I had never experienced this through many years of trying to be rehabilitated. I then understood that as I was in the church - the house of the Lord, I had the peace. Of course there were still some difficulties in the rehabilitation process but I felt the peace and the special covering. It was so strange.

Bang tried the drug detoxification at home. He commented on the difference he experienced in the Christian clinic:

My family supported me when I was rehabilitated at home. I lay on the bed and on the ground, very uncomfortable and severely painful. The biggest difference is the love in the clinic. Pastors prayed and workers massaged to release muscle aches. Here I felt much

more about love and experienced the power of God. During the first days, by God's mercy, it was not so painful and hard in drug withdrawal. I was tired but did not feel hurts inside my bones and muscle spasms like at home.

In Loan's case, she experienced a deliverance both from heroin and psychoactive drugs:

They prayed for me every day. I always needed Tamazepam<sup>31</sup> because I could not sleep under the effect of heroin (...). They took all the remaining drugs. Several days later, I could sleep. I received the prayer and I put the only thing I had, which was the hope in the Lord in His hands because I had nothing. I did not have my passport, I did not know your language [Vietnamese], I had no money and knew no one here. Certainly, my faith grew and things became new. That was in two weeks. During 10 years, there was not a day I did not use drugs to deal with depression and bipolar. For eight months since I was here, I did not touch a pill. I could not believe it.

#### **5.3.2.2. Recovery stage**

If the detox stage lasts for several hours or days, the recovery stage takes months. According to Thai:

The most important thing for a drug addict to get off drugs is learning the Bible every day. The words of God help me have a power. They comfort and encourage me when I get tired. They teach me, showing me what to do in everyday and for whole my life. They help me overcome temptations to relapse. It is not one or two days could I get rid of my past and my bad habits besides addiction such as telling lies and swearing. Everyday God teaches me through His words and naturally, He takes off these bad habits.

Son mentioned another effect of God's words on his heart. He said:

My thoughts and personalities have been changed. I lived indulgently with no hope and purpose for the future. But after being transformed, God changes my life and I know how to love people more. Before I was influenced by values and standards set by the world. I followed the flesh and involved in many social vices. I damaged my life, competed against others with malice. But now I start to take care of others, which I never did before.

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<sup>31</sup> Tamazepam is psychoactive drugs and prescribed to treat insomnia.

Furthermore, Loan had new understanding about herself by learning the Bible. She said:

I started to read the Bible. And this has changed my life. All the promises of the Lord are in the Bible and it gives me hope. So this time I have really received Jesus as Lord in my heart. The love of God and the Spirit in my heart (...) my heart is filled. The first time in my life I knew my value. And the person who loves me the most is the Lord. In the first time of my life, 40 years of my life, I feel happiness, fullness and freedom.

### 5.3.3. Understanding of transformation

In detox and recovery stages, the drug addicts experienced something they called “difference” and “strange”. Later in the interviews, they used the word “transformation” when I asked them to define the “difference” and “strange” phenomenon they described.

For Thai, transformation is a gradual process in which both God and oneself act:

God has changed me gradually and every day. I am so surprised when I look back. I cannot believe I can give up doing these bad things. God and His words give me a supernatural power that I could not understand much at that time. Only when I had overcome, I knew that was God. When I was addicted and did not believe in Jesus, I often told lies and was willing to do bad things to have money to buy drugs. I did anything and even exchanged my conscience to satisfy my drug cravings. But when I have God, God teaches me and I no longer dare to do these things.

Loan shared the change in her heart was essential to her transformation:

...before I came to Vietnam, I did not want to live, I only want to use drugs. I did not think of anything even for myself. I used drugs a lot and I do not know why I did not die [because of drugs]. I asked why the Lord chose me? I did so many bad things when I used drugs and drunk. But He saved me and I am thankful to Him. I no longer want to use drug. I do not need to because my heart is full. In Vietnam, sometimes I feel lonely and I miss my home. But I have God and I am freed from drugs.

Giang talked about his experience on transformation:

Some areas in my life I experienced the immediate transformation but in other areas, it is gradual. Through the teaching of pastors, I get the definition of transformation. It simply means I like things I hated before and I hate things I loved before. For example, I got easy to lose my temper. I could be angry and argue with anyone. But now I do not like it. It does not bring any goodness for myself and create a negative atmosphere of disagreement among people. Many things the flesh loves such as envy, boast and pride. I feel they are so boring and I do not love them anymore. In contrast, I like to do things I never loved to do before. For example, I never said sorry to anyone even though I knew I was wrong. But the words of God have changed me. God controls my emotions and I become more honest. I rarely lose my temper and I say sorry to people if I am wrong.

Tu commented in detailed about his thoughts on transformation:

I recognize that there are two kinds of transformations: physical and spiritual. When human beings broke the relationship with God, they die spiritually. This is the root of the problem while using drugs is one of the symptoms. I know it because it was written in the Bible. I also recognize that when I get off drugs, my physical part is restored and functions as “in origin”. I can eat and sleep well. But about the soul inside, including mind, will and emotions, has not been completely transformed yet.

When I came to God and to his house, people who are covered in tattoos<sup>32</sup> and restored by God, massaged and prayed for me the whole night. I wondered why (...) I also heard about how their lives are transformed and then I was conquered. I also received the support, care and prayers from pastors. Pastor Cam was fasting for 21 days but he still worked together with us when we constructed a new gate for the clinic. These things happening in the clinic have made me change every day and God’s words has touched me every day so that I am gradually transformed.

I feel like the Holy Spirit pours out into my inner man and took place of my unclean, dirty past. Drugs and my sinful past attacked me but Jesus has come to give me a new life, as written: “if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come<sup>33</sup>”. I proclaim by my faith and

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<sup>32</sup> In Vietnam, people who have tattoos are not supposed to be honest and nice.

<sup>33</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:17a



walk in Jesus. Thanks God that the truth in His Word has transformed me, both physically and spiritually and from the inside out. I do believe that as long as I am in Christ, I can win the war on drugs.

Bang shared his understanding of transformation gaining through his own life:

Pastors have taught me that transformation is like a caterpillar becomes a butterfly. The caterpillar must cover itself inside a cocoon for a while to be transformed gradually. It must spend time to finish the metamorphosis process to eventually emerge as a beautiful butterfly. I want to be a butterfly. I want to be free and restored from drugs. I am being transformed by staying in the clinic with teacher Tuan Anh. I learn the Bible and being transformed. The Bible and the desire to be transformed and born again by God lead to a new version of me, who started to live differently and more meaningful.

#### **5.3.4. Role of the 16 rules and key factors contributing to drug rehabilitation**

When being asked about the roles of 16 rules, Thai expressed that, “for people who have lived in many prisons and rehabilitation clinics experience the hardness in collective environments, the 16 rules are not so challenging to keep”. He then added that the rules were not so different than the rules set in governmental rehabilitation centers. But one rule that is exclusive to the Christian rehabilitation clinic is that, all drug addicts must spend time learning the Bible, he said.

For Giang, he said he never obeyed any rules. Applying rules on him would even cause rebellion in his heart. He said:

My flesh could never obey. Rules that restricted me from doing something would even excite me doing that thing. It was my old man. I experienced transformation via prayers. I still depended on smoking after the detox stage. I found ways to bring and hide cigarettes in the clinic. But though the Bible and the teaching of pastors, I knew it was wrong. I then received the conviction from the Holy Spirit. Therefore, I decide not to smoke. I experienced that transformation through prayers and God’s answer.

Giang's case confirms the perspective of pastors and workers on the role of 16 rules. The 16 rules are not the most important factor in Christian drug rehabilitation as he shared:

I was forced to join some rehabilitation clinics that have numerous rules to obey. Living in the force of the law, people do good things and desire to have freedom. But once they have freedom, they cannot control themselves. That is why right after finishing four years in rehabilitation prison, I relapsed. The reason is these rehabilitation prisons do not solve the root of the problem. Change must be from inside, from the mind.

### 5.3.5. Self-evaluation and future plan

Drug addicts' self-evaluation of their spirit, soul and body will enhance the understanding about transformation and the program. They firmly proclaim their freedom from drugs. Loan said she was happy during her eight months in Vietnam. She said the time she was in Vietnam was good for her because she met and knew God. She said that she could not get out of drugs if she was still in Australia. Additionally, Giang in Thai Binh clinic shared more detail about his current state:

Thank God that my physical health is now perfect, even better than some people who never use drugs. About the spiritual health, I have joy.

Bang said he already feels free of his need to use drugs. He had met up with his drug addict friends when he visited his family but he did not take the drugs. He said that he now stays in the clinic not only for rehabilitation but desire to serve God.

Experiencing the transformation, these clients have a desire to share their testimony to the others, especially who are drug addicts. Loan said, "the Lord has blessed me. Through my testimony, I am helping a lot of people. In the end of the year, I will go back to Australia to share my testimony".

However, their plan for the future is not made yet and they are seeking God's will on their lives after being saved and transformed. Thai, Son and Tu almost finish the two-year program. They decided to stay one more year to ask for the calling of God for their lives. Tu wondered:

I have prayed many times that "God I want to commit my life to You". I have walked in Jesus for nearly two years. I have got many valuable lessons from God through

temptations and challenges I have gone through. I am thankful for His grace and mercy (...) I want to talk about His love and power to everyone (...) I used drugged since I was twelve-year-old. Drugs steal my childhood but God restores me. I want to share the Gospel that has saved me to other people.

Lastly, Bang opened about his difficulties in finishing the program and keeping staying in the clinic:

I will try to finish the two-year program. But my family situation is very difficult now (...) I planned to be here for only six months. But God has changed me. I want to seek God and transformed by Him (...) Therefore, I stay longer. I want to have a fully transformed life, to learn the Bible and do not want to use drugs again. I want to be His tool, either in the clinic or in somewhere else according to His will. I pray God keeps my heart for Him in any situation.

In this chapter, I have presented my collection of data based on interview and participant observation methods. Firstly, I briefly show my observation during the time visiting two clinics. Secondly, I present the data collected from interviews with three separate groups according to different sub-topics. However, I am not going to summarize their perspectives in this chapter. Rather, I will summarize, analyze and discuss the data collected in the discussion chapter which will follow under.



## 6. DISCUSSION

### 6.1. Scope and structure

This discussion chapter is organized to correspond to the sub-questions that make up my research objectives. I discuss these sub-topics by combining relevant theory with analysis of the findings obtained through my interviews with the pastors, clinic workers and addicts. The purpose of this discussion chapter is to build up useful insights to answer my research question and sub-questions in the conclusion chapter (chapter seven). Therefore, a summary of each sub-topic will be given to point out its key insights. Moreover, it should be noticed that information from the pastors and drug addicts present specific perspectives of these groups. While data collected from the workers might cover both perspectives as they are former addicts and who now work together with the pastors.

### 6.2. Motivations for participation and goals of the program

#### 6.2.1. Pastors and clinic workers

##### 6.2.1.1. Motivations for participation

Although pastors and workers who were interviewed have different lengths of time serving in the clinics and have different personal situations, they have quite similar motivations. According to a press conference of the Government Committee for religious affairs in 2012, there was around one million Christians in Vietnam out of a population of 90 millions<sup>34</sup>. With a low rate of Christianity in Vietnam and prejudice against drug addicts, being a Christian servant is challenging, and serving in the deliverance ministry is even more challenging. Therefore, it is important to know the pastors and workers' motivations to understand how their commitment to the deliverance ministry is formed and maintained.

The pastors emphasize feeling called to specialized in this ministry. Additionally, some clinic workers have experienced the calling in the very early stages of their rehabilitation process. Indeed, there are hundreds of drug addicts that have been delivered by the Christian program but not all of them stay and serve in the clinics after finishing the two-year program. Here, we

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<sup>34</sup> Pháp Luật thành phố Hồ Chí Minh 2012

understand the experience of the calling from God is for certain people. Moreover, the calling to this ministry is unique and strong. Pastor Sy said that the Spirit confirms the calling and strengthens him through prayers so that he continues to follow the calling. Thus, the calling is the main motivation for serving as it set them aside for this special ministry. The uniqueness and strength in nature of the calling forms a strong commitment to continue serving even in challenging times.

Pastor Sy's motivation for serving in the ministry differs from Pastor. Unlike Pastor Cam, Pastor Sy began the interview by telling me about challenges from his church, his family and ineffectiveness of his serving in the beginning of the ministry. Almost no one supported him to help drug addicts. Afterwards, he mentioned how the experience of being comforted, awoken and confirmed the calling by the Holy Spirit. Moreover, he said the Spirit reminded him of how God had delivered him to "prepare for the ministry in which I would help people who were addicted like me". According to him, this makes him remember what God did for his past and gives him a hope that God is also able to do impossible things in others' lives. Even though he faced many challenges in the beginning, this hope helped him stay firm in the present and guide him towards the future. After that challenging time, he indicated that he started to proclaim the power of God's words and cast out sickness, addictions and evil spirits. This led to a more fruitful season of his ministry as he claimed that "many addicts were healed from hepatitis C and lung cancer...and being transformed...". We can see that the Holy Spirit plays a guiding role for Pastor Sy to keep following and fulfilling God's calling for his life.

Reflecting from the theory chapter, the main contemporary missiological theme *Missio Dei* emphasizes that foundation of mission is God's calling (Ahonen, 2000, p.43). Similarly, Berentsen, Engelsviken and Jørgensen (2004, p.16) and Kirk (1999, p.21) showed that mission is originally from God to serve His purpose. It is a calling to participate in "creating new life, saving and freeing humans in Christ". In God's calling, He equips the Holy Spirit's power and guidance for mission (Ahonen, 2000, p.116 and Cray, 1999, p.39) especially in Pastor Sy's case. Therefore, God's calling is important to guide mission back to its original foundation. In six interviews with pastors and workers, they all shared that they experienced a firm and strong calling from God. The pastors face challenges in serving drug addicts but they keep following the calling, while former addicts have a desire to serve God but had to wait for the experience of being called before they serve in this ministry. Therefore, I can say that mission in the

ministry of deliverance is founded on the experience of God's calling according to the concept of *Missio Dei*.

Proceeding the concept of *Missio Dei*, mission is the sending of Jesus, then the Spirit and then the church to the world. As general knowledge in Christianity, all Christians belong to a universal church of believers while each of them might belong to a particular church. In the Christian drug rehabilitation program, we can see that mission is carried out with assistance from the church. Each clinic belongs to a particular church and these churches do mission through these clinics. I feel that this partnership with specific churches more in line with the *Missio Dei* since the mission directly relates to the church. Moreover, the churches that are affiliated with and sponsor the clinics help provide a rich source of financial support and human resources. The clinics are provided with materials for teaching the Bible to the addicts as well as having guest speakers from the church. This proves that mission must be church's nature as stated by Ahonen (2000, p.46 and p.146) and Kirk (1999, p.20). Practically, doing mission should relate to churches rather than individual in this case.

The calling is from God and it is up to humans whether to listen and obey. There are four reasons why pastors and workers follow the calling and serve in this ministry. First, it is the love and the deliverance power that they themselves have experienced. Among six pastors and workers, five are former drug addicts. They themselves know and experience how God loves, saves and delivers them. Consequently, they believe that other drug addicts can experience the salvation and deliverance power like they had experienced. Second, they witness the deliverance power through others. Although Pastor Cam did not have such experience of deliverance from drug addiction, some people in his family are former drug addicts. He witnesses and knows whether the Christian rehabilitation program is functional. Therefore, he wants to bring this good news to drug addicts and motivate them to participate. Third, service is their thanksgiving for God's salvation and deliverance in their life. Additionally, they understand God's purpose for the world is "everyone is saved". Thus, their decision to follow the calling is to show gratitude to God and fulfill what He wants. Finally, it is their love towards the others that motivates them, especially love towards the ones who are struggling with addiction. Five of the interviewees experience addiction throughout many years of their life and they do not want others have that severe experience. Pastor Sy said watching news of people who died from drugs or overdosed makes him cry. Moreover, Pastor Cam is an exceptional case as he himself did not experience addiction. Nevertheless, he sympathizes with drug

addicts: “I have a deep love for drug addicts and their families. My family had drug addicts so I understand how miserable it is. I have a burden in my heart about them”.

Discussing more about the workers, their motivations is quite different to that of the pastors. Either directly or indirectly, the two pastors mentioned the calling when they are asked about motivation for participation. The calling has confirmed to them from their early years of walking with God. They shared that God called and led them to the ministry. However, in the case of workers, they finished the two-year program and decided to study more about the Bible and seek for God’s calling. After being transformed and rehabilitated successfully, they want to step in this ministry among many other ministries. In addition, the pastors shared they were hesitant to serve in the ministry of drug deliverance until they experience the calling’s confirmation. Working in the deliverance ministry requires deep commitment and can be quite demanding. I can say that while the pastors tend to be led and chosen to serve in this ministry, the workers were actively seeking for God’s calling for ministry of deliverance in which they have experienced transformation and drug deliverance.

The experience of God’s calling is an anchor for their motivation and faithfulness in serving. Besides the calling, many authors such as Ahonen (2000) and Samuel (1999) mention specific factors leading to the serving. First, it is personal motives. There are some extreme features relating to the deliverance ministry as it relates to crimes. If it is not personal motive, I do not think they are willing to serve in this ministry. As they shared, God delivered either themselves or their family from drugs. God let them witness His actions and communicate Jesus’ Good News in both word and deed (Ahonen 2000, p.46). As mentioned above, they serve in this ministry as God manifested the power on their own lives. They have their own experience with God about the deliverance from addiction (except for Pastor Cam) and serving is about being thankful to God. It is personal touched areas from which the gratitude arises. With great gratitude and experience their commitment for God in serving this ministry is strengthened (Ahonen, 2000, p.46).

Second, is social motives. These interviewees do not only experience themselves being saved, delivered and freed by transformation but also understand mission theoretically as Kirk (1999, p.21) mentioned. Specifically, they are motivated to serve God and bring transformation for drug addicts like them. They are sharing their testimony with God’s love they have received and with the love they give to the others. This is in line with Ahonen (2000, p.46)’s comment about mission motives as usually personal motives while can also be social motives. Moreover,



this is in line with Samuel's comment on the combination of evangelism and social action (1999, p.227). He said that a Christian could not enter the Kingdom without caring for the others. We can see that all of the pastors and workers are motivated by love towards others when they serve in the ministry.

#### ***6.2.1.2. Goals of the program***

As pastors open the clinics and lead activities for drug addicts, each of them have set goals for the program. They can give the most accurate information about the nature and focus of the deliverance ministry. Particularly, Pastor Sy has a vision of "God transforms drug addicts". He clearly indicated that the goal of this ministry is "evangelism". Additionally, Pastor Cam gave a more specific goal in his answer. For him, goal of his clinic is to "deliver drug addicts from drugs" and "make them become disciples of God".

As there is a requirement of putting faith in Jesus in order to join the program, the question of whether evangelism as an ultimate goal of helping these drug addicts and if evangelism is the only reason for pastors to open the clinic has been raised. Pastor Cam explained that when he made this requirement among the 16 rules, he did not intend to force drug addicts to be converted. Nevertheless, both Pastor Cam and Pastor Sy affirmed that "only God could deliver the addicts" and "Jesus is the only solution for drug addiction". They have teams who give testimonies and advice to drug addicts. Although the two pastors used the words "advice" or "consult", it can be understood that these activities are "evangelism".

The two pastors agreed on keeping that requirement but they have different practical policies for non-believers. Both claimed that love is the key and foundation of their ministry regardless of if drug addicts believe in Jesus. Both claimed that they keep praying for the drug addicts regardless of the addicts' decision on faith. However, Pastor Cam lets them go back home while Pastor Sy lets the non-believers stay in the clinic up to three months before they are converted. It can be seen that Pastor Cam enforces this requirement more strictly than Pastor Sy. The reason Pastor Cam gave is that "God is the only solution". He meant that if drug addicts do not believe in Jesus, their drug rehabilitation will not work out. On the other hand, Pastor Sy shared that the purpose of letting unbelieving addicts stay in the clinic is to let them "see and feel loved, cared and helped from the workers" so that they would eventually put faith in Jesus. Thus, "faith in Jesus" is not only a prerequisite requirement for joining the program but for experience of transformation to be delivered from drugs.

Based on this, each pastor has different ways to enforce this requirement for their clinics. Pastor Sy lets them take a step in the program while Pastor Cam is strict and says no to them while keeping the door opened to them when they surrender to God. As I can notice, there is a tension between the foundation of love as they claimed and the strictness in keeping the requirement of accepting Jesus. Pastors and workers claimed that the clinics are open for everyone but the requirement of being converted is to be fulfilled. Although the reason for strictly keeping the requirement is for success in drug rehabilitation as the pastors said, it shows that there is a limitation of people who can receive the drug rehabilitation service. Through interviews with the pastors, it clearly shows that the Christian rehabilitation program here is more about evangelism than social action. According to Jennings's definitions (2013, p.362) mentioned in the introduction chapter, the two Christian rehabilitation clinics in Vietnam are active and exclusive FBO type and letting faith and religious teachings be an important role guiding their activities and only giving to those who share the same faith.

Additionally, the goal is clearly set and communicated among people who work in the clinics. The ultimate goal of the program is "to bring and proclaim the Gospel to save drug addicts", Ha said. We can see that from pastors to workers, the ultimate goal is the same. Nevertheless, specific goals can differ. If the pastors set two ultimate goals of the program, the workers have more specific goals regarding the addicts' daily routines whereas the pastors' goals are more general. The difference is probably caused by the fact that workers directly teach and take care of drug addicts on a daily basis. Guiding the addicts to study the Bible and create an environment where they have more opportunities to meet God are goals these workers pointed out. Noticing a high tendency of relapse after rehabilitation process, the workers said that the words learnt from the Bible and the encounter with God in the clinics keep the addicts from drugs even when they leave the clinics earlier than two-years due to personal reasons.

Reflecting from the theory, concept of the Kingdom of God is essential in contemporary missiology. It is about wherever God reigns, right relationship with God, with others and with the cosmic are established. Being in the Kingdom is being transformed – the old turns to the new and the bad turns to the good according to the Bible. Samuel & Sugden, (1999, p.14) explained that entering the Kingdom is not by deeds and efforts but by God's grace and by faith in Christ. This explains why conversion is required to join the program. Only by faith, addicts can get in the Kingdom of God. And only being in the Kingdom of God, the addicts are transformed and hence delivered from drugs.

As we saw in the theory, both Ahonen (2000, p.87) and Goheen (2014, p.227) present a tension between general and salvific acts, order of forgiveness of sins and renewal of life and evangelism or social action. The tension is so strong that it creates two separate traditions: Evangelical and Ecumenical. However, in the practice of Christian rehabilitation program, there is almost no tension as in the ecumenical tradition because the ultimate goal all pastors and workers pointed out is evangelism when using transformation as a method to rehabilitate the clients instead of medications is shown through the requirement of conversion in the 16 rules. This is in line with many evangelical authors such as Berentsen, Engelsviken and Jørgensen (2004, p.16) and Ahonen (2000, p.43)'s comments that mission should be back to its origin: evangelism. The clear mindset of pastors regarding to goal of the program eases the tension between evangelism and social action. Moreover, I can say that the deliverance ministry eases the tension between forgiveness of sins and renewal of life due to its holistic nature. After the conversion, it is more about transformation in which the clients are renewed by love and the words in the Bible. Additionally, the renewal is for the whole being as it does not only help the clients freed from drugs but also change in mind by the experience of transformation.

Drug addiction is indeed a social issue and if the program can rehabilitate addicts, it contributes much to the society. When an addict is rehabilitated, the family will be better off and so will the society as crime and dependency caused by the addict will be reduced. Social action is also reflected through the decision of pastor Sy to let unbelieving addicts stay in the clinic for a while before they want to put faith in Christ. It can be called the "integration of evangelism and social action in mission as transformation" (Samuel 1999, p.227). However, it can be seen that it is sometimes impractical as clinic's resource including humans, finance and time is limited. Consequently, priority should give to addicts who proclaim their faith as in Pastor Cam's clinic according to his sharing.

Based on these pastors' interviews, goals and nature of the Christian rehabilitation program are grasped. The program first aims to bring salvation through the faith in Christ to drug addicts and expand the Kingdom of God. Alongside with the salvation is transformation. Being saved leads to being transformed. Being transformation leads to being delivered from drugs without using any medication. And salvation is from God. So is the transformation. We can see that this idea is a key mindset for the program and reflected through the requirement of putting faith in Jesus in their 16 rules. The pastors put it in the rules because they believe that faith is the key

foundation of Christian drug rehabilitation. And transformation is the key factor leading to that success. It aims to transform the addicts so that they can be delivered from drugs.

### 6.2.2. Drug addicts

Turning to drug addict's perspective, we can understand more about reasons why they decide to join the Christian rehabilitation program. First, it should be noticed that during drug addiction and at one time or another, either the drug addicts themselves or their family were looking for a solution for rehabilitation. Their desire to find help outside of themselves show drug addicts and their families have higher potential responsive to the Gospel. Particularly, excluding Loan, five out of six addicts heard the Gospel and testimonies of the workers. Besides the message of the Good News and testimonies shared, transformation observed through the workers' mannerisms and demeanor is the main factor that convincing the addicts joined the program. In my opinion, the drug addicts felt familiar and recognized themselves in these former addicted workers. The testimonies give drug addicts a hope of being transformed and delivered like the workers. Therefore, it depends on how evangelism is done to reach drug addicts and become their motivation to join the program.

Furthermore, in many cases which the addicts personally decided to join the program they did not mention the persecution they might face as being Christians in Vietnam. Understanding Vietnamese culture, I expect that the families tend to keep their traditional religion and Christianity is far from their traditions. Here it can be understood that the families experienced and observed a series negative effects of drugs on the body and mind of addicts as well as its effects on the families and the society. Thus, the families tended to accept anything even it sounded strange to them, as long as their children were saved from drugs. Nevertheless, they did not only try to find any method they heard of. But through the testimonies, they – in more conscious status than the addicts – put the hope that their children would be delivered like these workers.

Most of the drug addicts who were interviewed had spent many years of their youth doing drugs. Drugs do not only have physically and psychologically negative effects on the addicts themselves but on people who relate to them such as families, friends and the surrounding community. In their worst status of health and mentality, families were the ones who actively found the solution for the addicts and for their whole families. Therefore, families also played an essential role in encouraging and motivating the addicts to join the program.

Nevertheless, evangelism shared directly to the addicts did not work in some cases. I think that it because addicts' health does not function properly and the program is voluntary, it may take time for them to really decide to come to the Christian clinics. Therefore, the addicts were influenced by their families in addition to the testimonies heard. In the interviews with the addicts, we can see that there are two cases. One is one of the family members has faith in Christ first and persuaded the addicts to join the program like Giang's case. Another case is that when the testimonies were shared, family members were convinced and they encouraged the addicts to participate in the program like Bang's case. I can say that families are more responsive to the Gospel than the addicts. Nevertheless, Loan's case is an exception. Loan's mother is a Buddhist but she still sent her to the Christian clinic in Vietnam. It shows that Loan's mother is responsive to the program, not the Gospel, but she is willing to turn to Christianity if it means her daughter can be healed.

Interviews with drug addicts about their motivation for participation show that evangelism the addicts received is not a forced conversion. The workers shared their testimonies and let the addicts decide. Therefore, it can be seen that although there is a requirement of conversion to join the program, the addicts have freedom to decide. In fact, most of them would participate due to their desperation to get out of the circle of relapse. All the interviewed addicts shared much about their struggle with drugs before joining the program. They had chance to hear about the Gospel either in evangelistic events or personal testimonies from the workers. The seed was sown but it depends on many factors so that it grew. In fact, the Christian program is not the first rehabilitation program these addicts participated. They went through both governmental and private programs. They heard the Christian program but as it was their free choice to join, they spent time struggling with their addictions with both physical and mental diseases; and increasingly drug dependency for a while before totally surrendered and joined the Christian program. They wanted to be released but it was impossible.

Hence, we can see that there are two reasons why the addicts said yes to the program in this time. First, they were convinced by the testimonies and had a desire to experience the transformation. Second, the addicts wanted to try any method they know in their hopeless or they wanted to please their family. Compared to the first reason, participation due to the second reason has some negative consequences. In Giang's case, he joined the program to please his mother and tried the rehabilitation to learn about what it is. Consequently, he left the clinic after several months like he shared. Now he said he surrendered and came back to the clinic with a

belief that only God can transform and deliver him. In Loan's case, it took much more time and energy from the pastors and workers to deal with her situation. Therefore, addicts' own desire for being transformed and delivered should be the motivation to join the program. Without own desire, the addicts also kept struggling much as in any other rehabilitation program. I see that Christian program claims itself as different from others due to not using medications and foster transformation in mind – root of the problem – by guiding them study the Bible and showing love to them. However, the program needs cooperation from the addicts. The addicts must have a strong desire to be released and must have hope in God and in the program. This can explain why the workers pointed out that the desire to be rehabilitated is one of the most important factors leading to a successful rehabilitation.

Through the interviews with addicts, the way pastors and workers evangelize is revealed. First, I want to discuss about the providence of the Spirit mentioned in the theory chapter. Ahonen (2000, p.118) indicated that although the Spirit guides and empowers mission, it does not mean salvation is determinism. God gives humans freewill to decide their faith. It can be seen that mission done by pastors and workers is in line with the understanding of provenience of the Spirit. They all claimed that they seek, wait and follow the Spirit's guidance. They believe the Spirit equips and empowers them in mission. They are patient to give drug addicts time until they choose to surrender and believe in God as they know that the seed they sow will eventually grow by the provenience of the Spirit. At the same time, the interviews show that they are actively share testimonies to drug addicts and their family regardless of the result. They evangelize through many ways such as events or personal talk, approaching the addicts directly or through their family. They do not let the Spirit work on his own but indefatigably participate in the mission. Second, their evangelism is according to Kirk (1999, p.63)'s comment about the content of evangelism. Here we can see that testimonies are one of the most convincing evangelistic way to win people for God. Then when the workers proclaimed the Gospel, it brings the good news to addicts. Evangelism here is about testifying God's power to transform and deliver drug addiction. It shows that when the workers contact and approach drug addicts, they have a clear mindset of evangelism rather than only social action.

### 6.2.3. Summary

Through the interviews about motivations for participation and goals for the program, we gain the understanding of mission nature in the ministry of deliverance in Vietnam. First, the mission is about the experience of God's calling for each person as serving in the ministry is challenging

and might be dangerous. Based on their explanations of why they serve, the pastors and workers, we can see the experience of God's calling for their life is special and strong. Their life related to drug addiction, either themselves or their family. Their mind related to experience of transformation and deliverance. Therefore, their commitment to serve in the ministry is strong as they have a desire to give thanks to God and show love to other drug addicts. Hence, they have both personal and social motives. It should be also noticed that workers are very active in seeking the calling for serving. Second, although conversion is forced, it is put in the 16 rules which addicts must agree to in order to join the program. It clearly shows the ultimate goal of the program without any confusion and vagueness: evangelism. The reason pointed out is that "Jesus is the only solution for drug addiction". Pastors shared that if addicts do not put faith in God, the rehabilitation will not work. Agreeing on the ultimate goal, workers pointed out more specific goals as they work closely to the drug addicts. Third, sharing testimonies are an effective evangelistic method as this is the main reason for drug addicts' participations in the program. Testimonies inspire addicts and their family and give them a hope of being transformed and delivered by God. It can be seen that having faith in God is a key factor in the Christian program. Meanwhile, decision to join the program belongs to the addicts. Interviews with drug addicts show that they have freedom to choose if they put faith in God.

### **6.3. Experience of transformation**

#### **6.3.1. Pastors and clinic workers**

For pastors and workers, they observe transformation experienced by the drug addicts. According to the pastors and workers, transformation process is visible as there is a big difference between a drug addict and a one who has been transformed and delivered from drugs. They used the metaphors of bearing-fruit trees and gradual-illuminated moon to describe the nature of transformation. Through these metaphors, we can see that transformation is a process and visible through relationship with God and with the others. Particularly, Pastor Sy gave some specific examples illustrating the relationship with God such as whole-hearted attitude in worship time and a frequent prayer habit. Remarkably, while the pastors gave quite general descriptions of signals of transformation, workers gave more specific ones. As being close to the addicts from the beginning and observing their gradually transformation, most of the workers commented that there was a huge difference between before and after drug addicts let God transform them.

Specifically, many workers noticed that there were some positive signals gaining by self-effort and self-impression to prove that they are good, rather than transformation mentioned here. According to them, transformation is a result of deep fellowship with God. If the signals such as joy, peace, getting touched in worship times and showing love through caring and serving to others are not the results of daily fellowship with God in personal worship and praying time, it is not transformation. If drug addicts do not connect to God, their problems cannot be solved.

As we see, the workers describe signals of transformation to emphasize the relationship between the fellowship with God and transformation. Through the observation of these workers, signals of transformation are shown as the addicts adopt Christian lifestyles. Under the general signals of being kind – be kind for themselves and be kind to the others, there is a foundation of transformation built from the fellowship with God. In other words, the fellowship with God through studying the Bible, praying and worship is a catalyst for transformation and a signal of transformation. It can see what happens in the clinics is that drug addicts put their faith in God, started to grow in the relationship with God and put God in their heart. In turn, they receive the power of transformation from God and the transformation they received brings them being closer to God to experience more complete transformation. In short, God shows love and grace to the drug addicts through love and grace from the workers. The addicts in turn respond to God by putting God in their heart and spend time for the relationship with God. They then experience the transformation from God to get rid of the old lifestyle and adopt the Christian lifestyle including being freed from drugs.

Although personal transformation is not mentioned much in most of materials on mission as transformation, there are some points in the theory illustrated by the interviews on signals of transformation. Transformation is a feature of the Kingdom of God in which God starts a new order and relationship with God as well as with others are restored (Samuel & Sugden, 1999). The two authors continued that mission as transformation is the mission of the Kingdom to free humans from destructive forces and “express the Lordship of Jesus over all aspects of life”. Therefore, a developing relationship with God through praying and learning the Bible is the most important indicator showing that transformation is in place.

As we saw in chapter three, Samuel (1999, p.229) explained the four main components of mission as transformation. It is about witness and invite people to experience freedom and power so that relationship with God and with others are reconciled. It is a combination of evangelism and social change. In the scope of this thesis, social transformation is not



emphasized or focused on. Instead, I chose to collect data regarding personal transformation. Nevertheless, we can see some implied points in our understanding of transformation based on the interviews. The workers experienced transformation and they evangelize to other drug addicts. The process is continuous and the transforming addicts keep going out to proclaim God's power to deliver their addictions. As one addict is part of the family and part of the society, the change they experienced influence and may bring change to their own family and society.

### 6.3.2. Drug addicts

If the pastors and workers observe transformation through signals, the drug addicts have the most direct experience on how transformation is experienced and how it delivers them from drugs. During the gathering data process, I spent much more time on interviewing the addicts as their experience reflects more closely the concept of transformation in practice.

#### 6.3.2.1. Detox stage

Based on a short search on the Internet and knowledge get from the interviews, I acknowledge that drug addicts experience many withdrawal symptoms during the detox stage. As mentioned in the Findings chapter, they include muscle aches, insomnia, nausea and diarrhea. This detox stage is called "physical detox" as general term in drug rehabilitation. The scope of this research is social science so it will not go deeply to medical issues. However, it should be noticed that the addicts suffer from a lot of withdrawal symptoms. On some rehabilitation websites, it is recommended that addicts should go through supervised medical detox programs to monitor and support the addicts through adverse and even life threatening effects of the drug detox<sup>35</sup>. This shows that the detox stage is extremely uncomfortable and being a big barrier for addicts to overcome when they want to be rehabilitated.

All the interviewed addicts experienced withdrawal symptoms in either governmental or private rehabilitation programs. Therefore, they can point out the difference experienced in the Christian program. In general, the addicts experienced and recognized the difference in the detox stage compared to other programs. They confirmed that they had withdrawal symptoms but they were much less severe and easier to overcome. They had less fear. They received the prayer, love and care from the workers. Moreover, they were guided to put hope in God and

asked for the strength from Him. In the middle of these uncomfortable feelings, they followed the instruction from the workers. But they could not exactly explain for these difference, until they got into the recovery stage when they are learning the Bible. They shared that by the words of God, they understand that it was God's power helping them experience withdrawals symptoms in the detox stage more comfortably and more peacefully.

Experience of transformation in the detox stage can be referred to "the already" nature of the Kingdom (Cray 1999, p.31). According to this nature, drug addicts have stepped in the Kingdom once they put faith in Jesus and let He reigns their lives. Hence, they have tasted "the already" of "righteousness, peace and joy"<sup>36</sup> in the detox stage by God's grace (Cray, 1999, p.30). This gives more hope to drug addicts and motivates them to keep participating in the program to experience transformation more completely. Remarkably, drug addicts shared withdrawals symptoms are less severe due to the power of God. The power they claimed to be experienced is supposed to be "work of the Spirit" (Cray, 1999, p.36). In the Kingdom, individual can experience the power and guidance of the Spirit (Cray, 1999, p.40). In my opinion, experience the power of the Spirit is especially essential in the detox stage in the deliverance ministry. Without using medications, comfort experienced by the Spirit must be in place to help drug addicts overcome withdrawals symptoms.

#### ***6.3.2.2. Recovery stage***

Watkins (2012) stated that drug addiction does not only influence physical health but also mental health. Therefore, there is an increasing use of behavioral therapy in contemporary rehabilitation programs. From the interviews, I can see that studying the Bible plays a role as behavioral therapy in non-religious rehabilitation programs. Besides several days to several weeks to go through the detox stage, the rest of the program is used for recovery stage. If the detox stage is the beginning of transformation's experience, the recovery stage focuses on building a firm understanding and fostering the experience of transformation for the addicts so that they can be completely delivered from drugs. Moreover, if the detox stage is the experience of the Spirit's power, prayers and care from workers, the recovery stage is the process of learning the Bible and being transformed by the words written inside.

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36 Romans 14:17

It can be seen through the interviews on understanding of transformation that the words written in the Bible has two main influences on these addicts. First, it is fixing and re-forming the addicts into a normal status. As we know, it takes time to change a habit, especially bad habit may need more time to be broken. Here, the Bible has the role of guiding drug addicts what to be changed. Secondly, learning the Bible helps to keep the addicts from relapse by forming Christ-like mindset and characteristics. Loan said she has learnt and experienced that her value is put in Jesus, Jesus loves her and she is worthy to Him. She also shows care and love to the others.

Here, the concept of “the already” and “the not yet” can be used gain to explain for the nature of transformation: being a process (Cray, 1999, p.42 and Goheen 2014, p.251). Besides recognizing that work of the Spirit for individual is unique regarding timing and manner, it shows that drug addicts notice this nature of the Kingdom. In the interviews, it can be seen that they have hope in a complete transformation when Jesus comes back and they have a desire to foster the relationship with God to experience more transformation day by day. Simultaneously, the “not yet” keeps them being humble and rely on God for an experience of full transformation when God comes back.

### 6.3.3. Summary

Through the data collected from pastors, workers and drug addicts, we understand more about the experience of transformation. According to pastors and workers, transformation can be observed through drug addicts’ expression in the relationship with God and with the others. As in the previous session, workers also give more detailed discussion of the signs of transformation than pastors in this session. Transformation starts from personal relationship with God through praying and reading the Bible. It then is expressed through their attitudes in worship and Bible learning times. It is also reflected through love and care drug addicts show to the others. Hence, we can see transformation is from inside and out. Additionally, personal transformation naturally leads to social transformation as individuals are part of the society. Similarly, drug addicts shared that they experience transformation through learning the Bible as a process of forming Christ-like lifestyle in the recovery stage. Meanwhile, experience of transformation in the detox stage is more about experience of power of the Spirit to overcome withdrawal symptoms. Experience of transformation can be summarized as “a miraculous act of God that imparts life to our sinful spirits, changes our being and leads to a changed outlook and a new destiny” (Kinghorn, 1992, p.94). It is a process with “the already” and “the not yet”

nature which gives hope to the addicts to keep fostering relationship with God to experience a more complete transformation.

## **6.4. Key factors contributing to drug rehabilitation**

### **6.4.1. Pastors and clinic workers**

As pastors and workers pointed out, the program is coordination among God, pastors, clinic workers and drug addicts. God calls people working in the clinics evangelized the addicts. God, testimonies and love from the workers touch the addicts. The addicts respond by putting faith in Christ, open heart for workers and learning of the Bible. Relationship with God and workers leading to transformation in mind which in turn leading to the deliverance from drugs. It should be noticed that while the pastors pointed out factors leading to successful rehabilitation is more on the clinic environment's side: love and care received from the pastors and workers, the workers mentioned more about factors from the addicts' side: long for experience of transformation to be delivered.

The pastors and workers said the 16 rules are to form healthy lifestyles which are especially important for drug addicts. Moreover, the rules help to promote disciplines and order in the clinics where drug addicts living together as a community. In addition to these rules, there is a rule for following the Bible study plan. I have observed the similarity in opinions of pastors and workers on the importance of the 16 rules. From the founders who are pastors to the practitioners who are workers, they consider the 16 rules are important for the rehabilitation process. Besides rules to building up healthy routines, the requirement of putting faith in Christ to join the program and compulsory hours to study the Bible are two distinctive rules compared to other programs.

Especially, workers in Thai Binh clinic seemed to less rely on the 16 rules. Tuan Anh said that most of the addicts do not obey the rules in the beginning although he agreed that the rules are necessary to form the normal routines for the addicts. Moreover, workers in this clinic emphasized more on the role of the workers than the addicts as Hanoi clinic. In Tuan Anh's perspective, the drug addicts who come here already have a desire of being rehabilitated. Additionally, feeling accepted and loved from the pastors and workers is extremely opposite to the fact that drug addicts often feel left out and rejected. Thus, "love" is the more decisive factor in the rehabilitation process. From both experience as a drug addict and observation as a clinic

worker, Tuan Anh declared that feeling loved is able to motivate drug addicts do something to deserve that love. Thus we can understand that, expression of love and care can open the hearts of drug addicts so that they open for God, the Bible and the Spirit. This openness will lead to the transformation – what they need to be successfully delivered from drugs.

According to the workers, when drug addicts learn the Bible, they may understand their real value in God – being created and saved by God regardless of who they are and what they have done. When the problem in mind is solve, lifestyle is adjusted and consequently, addiction will be released. Transformation must happen from the inside to solve the outside problem of addiction. Therefore, learning the Bible has priority compared to following the 16 rules. According to the workers, God’s words carries out the transformation and hence the deliverance from drugs.

#### **6.4.2. Drug addicts**

If pastors and workers could point out the most important factors contributing to successful rehabilitation as a whole, the addicts reflected on their own experiences. Most of them consider the 16 rules, except for the requirement of putting faith in Jesus, as normal because they used to be in many other programs before. In other rehabilitation programs, they are also asked to follow certain rules to reform healthy routines. Giang in Thai Binh clinic even considered the 16 rules as a cause of rebellion in his heart. He explained that his old man always wanted to go against any rules. The Spirit and prayers are other important factors in his rehabilitation. Additionally, Thai and Son in Hanoi clinic indicated that the rule of spending time learning the Bible and the desire to have freedom and independence on drugs are important factors.

In the detox stage, the addicts emphasized on how prayers and love from the workers helped them overcome the withdrawal symptoms. In the recovery stage, the addicts emphasized on how the Bible has transformed them. Although some interviewees have almost finished the program and some have just participated for several months, all of them confirmed the effect of the words written in the Bible on their life. In the clinics, they have daily learnt in Bible study courses and sermons. Thai said “the most important factor to get off drugs is learning the Bible everyday”.

### **6.4.3. Summary**

As we can see, the 16 rules give direction for forming healthy routines for the addicts but not a transformation-giving factor. Instead, love expressed from the workers and the Bible are two contributors of transformation. The love makes drug addicts feel like “a family”. This creates the hope and hence, faith in the power of God which can deliver the addicts from drugs as Pastor Cam commented. Particularly, coordination among the Trinity, pastors, clinic workers and drug addicts lead to transformation experienced by drug addicts. God calls pastors and workers to serve in the ministry and the Holy Spirit’s providence touches the hearts of drug addicts. Pastors and workers give testimonies, showing love and care to drug addicts. Drug addicts respond by putting faith in God and being willing to learn the Bible and follow the 16 rules.

## **6.5. Understanding of transformation**

In the above sessions, I have discussed the goals of the programs, experience of transformation and important factors of the drug rehabilitation process as well as the role of 16 rules. By directly asking the informants how they understand transformation, more insights will be added to the above contributing information.

### **6.5.1. Pastors and clinic workers**

Both pastors quoted 2 Corinthians 5:17 to emphasize that transformation is a process of becoming reborn in Christ. In their definition of transformation, there were two key elements of transformation which should be noticed. First, the condition of transformation is “in Christ”. In order for God to activate His power on one’s life, the one must be “in Christ”. Second condition is that transformation is a changing process that starts in a Christians’ soul. As the inside is changed, the outside including attitudes and words expressed will be changed. Based on this understanding, the clinics create an environment in which drug addicts can be “in Christ”. Particularly, drug addicts are required to put faith in Christ, study the Bible according to the clinics’ schedule and live together in the love and care of other Christians. This “in Christ” environment also fosters the process of transformation for the addicts. Hence, organization and administration of the clinics are built up from this understanding of transformation.

Similarly, all four workers declared that transformation is especially important for rehabilitation process. Transformation is frequently mentioned in the Bible and Christians are asked to be transformed<sup>37</sup>. Based on the sharing of these workers and general knowledge of drug addiction, we know that drug addicts tend to commit crimes and bad habits to pursue their drug craving. They also face many hurts and losses during the addictions. Therefore, as long as they understand and experience love, forgiveness, acceptance and mercy from God, they tend to open their heart. Instead of pursuing drugs, they pursue God with the similar level of intensity. Their transformation brings hope for other addicts. The addicts have been transformed to be a means of transformation for others. Hence, while there are many works related to the ministry such as caring, teaching and consulting the clients, the ultimate purpose of the ministry of deliverance is evangelism by the transforming addicts.

### 6.5.2. Drug addicts

The addicts had a taste of transformation in the detox stage and experience it in the recovery stage. If the experience of God's supernatural power helped them go through the withdrawal symptoms comfortably and peacefully, the words in the Bible helped them to transform their mind so that they are totally delivered from drugs. Most of them had a taste of the transformation in the detox stage but until in the recovery stage, they begin to learn and understand the concept of transformation. Thus, I can say that the transformation mostly happens in the recovery stage when the addicts are more conscious and their health status is improved through detoxification.

Indeed, the transformation comprises of experience and understanding. Understanding transformation is first about understanding the effects of its activator and catalyst: The Bible. First, the Bible is a guidance for the addicts' life. Above all, the interaction creates a hope for the addicts as Tu said "I do believe that as long as I dwell in Christ, I can win the war on drugs". Additionally, according to them, God does not leave them alone to fulfill all of His teachings. Thai told me "God wants me to stop and gives me the strength to stop doing these bad things...when I lean on God, it became easier". Thus, it can be seen that during the transformation, the Bible is the guidance for their life while God gives them the strength and support to follow that guidance.

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<sup>37</sup> Romans 12:2

Transformation also requires the participation of addicts. The interviews show that the Bible is an activator and catalyst of transformation. However, if the addicts do not learn, meditate and do according to the Bible, how can transformation be carried out? The interviews show that the addicts have a desire to learn the Bible. They also lean on God for His help to overcome their old life and create a new one in Christ.

My question is then, what made the addicts desire to learn the Bible and put the whole trust in God in the recovery stage? Of course they received Jesus in order to participate in the program. They could have passively followed the schedule of learning the Bible and finished the program. However, when I talked to these addicts, I could see their passion for learning the Bible and put their hope on Jesus. This passion may have been the result of their transformation experience in the detox stage. Before joining the program, they were motivated by what they heard from the workers' testimonies. After joining the program, they are motivated by what they experienced especially in the detox stage.

All of the clients live in the clinic and receive similar teachings, care and schedule but they experience transformation in different timing. It means that the transformation needs a certain period of time to work out after being activated. In the interview with Tu, he implied that transformation is a process. He said "when I get off drugs, my physical part is restored and functions as in origin. But the soul including mind, will and emotions has not been completely transformed yet".

Remarkably, the Spirit plays a key role in transformation process according to the materials presented in *Mission in Context* (2004) and the *Cape Town Commitment* (2011). As we saw in the findings chapter, from motivations to experience and understanding of transformation, the Spirit is a coordinator of transformation. The Spirit calls, equips and empowers the workers to give testimonies. The Spirit's provenience for the mission and invite the addicts enter the Kingdom in different ways and manners. The Spirit give a taste of transformation in detox stage and supporting the addicts in experiencing more complete transformation in recovery stage. Overall, the Spirit is "the executive, ambassador or steward of the Kingdom" (Cray, 1999). However, work of the Spirit is sometimes mysterious (Ahonen, 2000, p.116). This is proven by confirmation of pastors, workers and addicts as they notice the different timing of being transformed for each addict. They have learnt to be patient and rely on the Spirit while keeping the environment which fosters transformation in the clinics.



### 6.5.3. Summary

Transformation is an inside-out change and a process of being less self and more God in their life. Second, transformation is carried out due to the condition of being in Christ. To be in Christ, addicts first need to put faith in Jesus or being converted. Then they need to live in an environment in which the status of “in Christ” is maintained. Particular, transformation requires a close relationship with God building through learning of the Bible, praying, experiencing love and care from the others. Finally, role of the Spirit is remarkable in transformation process. As the addicts shared, the Spirit touched them when they heard testimonies of the workers and gave them taste of transformation in the detox stage. In my opinion, this lead to the desire to experience more transformation in the recovery stage. During the process, they experience encouragement and empowerment of the Spirit to keep relationship with God and open for God to transform them.

## 6.6. Evaluation of the transformation process

### 6.6.1. Pastors and clinic workers

Pastor Sy pointed out that God shows His love and power to everyone but in different manners. Some drug addicts experienced the transformation within several days while the others were several months and years. Pastor Sy concluded that people who doing this ministry should not focus too much on the results but keep going on in the serving because God controls the results and sometimes His work is mysterious. Pastor Cam also observed the nuanced difference of transformation in timing. During the two-year program, some addicts experienced the transformation before that and the others were after that. Explaining for these differences, both pastors agreed that participating in the program for two years does not assurance one will be transformed. It is more about how much the addicts being touched by God and how close and how open their fellowship to God to quickly experience the transformation.

Pastor Sy also believed that the Christian rehabilitation program has a high rate of success. Fewer drug addicts who go through the program relapse than other programs. Nevertheless, he emphasized “not all the pupils join the program are delivered”. Some came here several months and relapsed three or four times until they were totally delivered. Referring to Jesus’ ministry, Pastor Sy declared that Jesus healed people who need Him and run to Him. Pastor Cam believed that two-years are enough for experiencing transformation. He declared addicts who go through

the two-years have 100% of being rehabilitated successfully. I notice that Pastor Cam is stricter than Pastor Sy with the requirement of conversion. Hence, I believe that once drug addicts are converted, he is strongly confident that they will be delivered from drugs. In practice, there might have some exceptions of relapse.

Working closely with the addicts, all four workers claimed that two years were the starting point of the process while the pastors think that two years are enough. Dung said “the rate of relapse into drugs is still high if they do not follow the words in the Bible and attach to the local church after the two-year program”. The workers mentioned much more about relapse after rehabilitation process. The high risk of relapse explains why the workers pointed out factors such as the Bible and fellowship with God as key factors. The 16 rules and love and care received from the workers are able to keep the addicts off of drugs while they are in the clinics. But after two years, the words of God and personal fellowship with God are factors keeping them for a life-long deliverance.

It can be seen that according to the workers’ perspective, drug addicts need “a little more time to completely solve the physical and mental issues caused by drugs as well as equip them for the life after rehabilitation”. We may know that drug addiction is complicated and problematic regarding to its damage to addicts’ physical and mental health. Meanwhile, transformation is a process which requires time to build up fellowship with God and meditate the Bible until their minds are brought back to the original stage and move forward to be transformed with Christian characters. Consequently, a longer time of participating in the program can be recommended. Indeed, some addicts experience transformation after several months while the others finish the two-years but not be transformed much. Thus, it is about if within that two-years, the Bible study plan and care from workers are able to motivate and inspire the addicts to long for deep relationship with God and long for transformation to experience the transformation. This is the key point which decide if the program is successful. It is all about if the program can offer the catalyst for the desire of drug addicts to activate the transformation through Christ.

When they finish the two-years and reintegrate into the community, it is hard for the clinics to actively continue helping them. As the workers share, they contact the local churches so that drug addicts can be cared after the rehabilitation. But in fact, some addicts live far away and the nearest local church is often too far away from their homes. It is challenging for them to go to church every Sunday. Hence, I can observe that the workers are very enthusiastic and diligent in teaching the Bible and foster the addicts’ personal relationship with God. Rather than

depending on external conditions such as location of local churches, workers focus on teaching addicts to foster personal transformation and reliance on Bible teachings for guidance.

As transformation is a long process, I recommend that the workers should give more after care for the clients who finish the two-year program. As the workers shared, they look for local churches and pastors for these addicts and often call them to encourage and motivate them keeping the relationship with God. I understand that it is hard to keep contacts with the addicts for many external reasons such as losing the numbers or local churches are far and do not pay attention much to these addicts. However, this requires more resources such as finance and human resource. I believe three-year program gives a better guarantee for being transformed as the addicts have more time to mediate the Bible and form Christ-like lifestyle while living in the Christian faith communities.

### **6.6.2. Drug addicts**

All six addicts talked positively about the program and confirming that they want to follow the program until the end. They proclaimed they are free from drugs now and in the process of being transformed. Personally, I can recognize their physical and mental health as good. They could properly answer my question in order.

Additionally, most of the addicts have a desire to serve God both during and after rehabilitation. In the clinics' evangelistic events, they often give testimonies and travel together with the workers. I can see that they are quite concern about the future after rehabilitation. They have a desire to share their testimonies when they have chance. Moreover, some of them are waiting for a specific calling from God and want to serve Him fulltime.

### **6.6.3. Summary**

The pastors were quite confident that the Christian rehabilitation clinics' success as measured by lack of relapse. From the workers and the addicts' perspectives, there seemed to be consensus that the program has been successful for transformation but they felt that a longer program [perhaps three years] and more after-care support would be helpful in preventing relapses. Moreover, the addicts evaluate their current conditions as good and have a desire to experience a more complete transformation as well as experience of God's calling on their lives after drug rehabilitation.

Pastor Sy and workers recognize drug deliverance and hence transformation, depend on some particular contributors. Mission of deliverance starts from God and the way and time God works in each addict are unique. Additionally, it depends on drug addicts' response expressed through desire to learn to Bible and invest in relationship with God in prayers. It also depends on the environment pastors and workers in the clinics built up including Bible learning schedules. In my opinion, once such conditions are taken into the account, success rate of drug rehabilitation is expected to be as high as the pastors' evaluation.



## 7. CONCLUSION

### 7.1. The research question and sub-questions

The aim of this research has been to investigate how transformation is experienced and understood in the Christian drug rehabilitation program in Vietnam. I wanted to gain the understanding of how Christian drug rehabilitation clinics in Vietnam help in bringing about transformation according to perspectives of people who work for the clinics and people who have experienced the rehabilitation transformation process. Moreover, I wanted to understand how faith in God and experience of transformation in drug rehabilitation relate to each other. As my background is strongly linked to Vietnam, I chose two clinics in Hanoi and Thai Binh province as a case study for my research. The message these clinics proclaim is that, one needs to transform their life through Christ or be reborn in Christ in order to be delivered from drugs. Using their message as a starting point, I have presented theories relating to mission as transformation and chose it as the main theme of my research. Particularly, my research question was:

**How is transformation is understood and experienced by pastors, clinic workers and drug addicts as a means of delivering drug addicts from addiction in the Christian rehabilitation program in Vietnam?**

The research sub-questions were the followings:

1. How is transformation experienced by the pastors and clinic workers?
2. How is transformation experienced by the drug addicts?
3. How is transformation understood by the pastors and clinic workers?
4. How is transformation understood by the drug addicts?
5. How is the transformation process evaluated by the pastors and clinic workers?
6. How is the transformation process evaluated by the drug addicts?

These six sub-questions orderly guide the research through interviews with three groups of interviewees and make it more convenient to compare their different perspectives on transformation later on. Reflecting the understanding and experience of transformation from different perspectives give the research more nuanced answer for the main research question. In this chapter, I present the answers to my thesis questions.

## 7.2. The research design

In order to answer the research question and sub-questions, I collected data from interviews and participant observation in the two Christian rehabilitation clinics in Vietnam. In this qualitative research, I chose twelve informants including pastors, workers and drug addicts to obtain their perspectives on the understanding and experience of transformation. Then I gave an overview of literature regarding to mission and mission as transformation. Specifically, I applied the concept of *Missio Dei* and holistic mission which combines Evangelical and Ecumenical traditions in my data analysis. Holistic mission has the dimension of transformation. Moreover, the idea of the Kingdom of God is “an umbrella” for the theory of holistic mission and mission as transformation. Finally, I used the findings, theories and my own insights to analyze data acquired from interviews and participant observation.

## 7.3. Motivations, goals and key factors of the program

These insights contribute to the understanding of the role of transformation in the program as articulated in the answers to my six sub-questions.

My first concern was why pastors, workers and drug addicts participated in the program. For pastors and workers, it is first due to experience of God’s calling. This confirms the concept of *Missio Dei* which stated that mission is God’s sending and is originally from God. However, pastors received the experience of calling while workers sought for it by staying in the clinics after finishing the drug rehabilitation program. Additionally, love is the key motivation for responding the calling of doing mission. This is in line with most of missiological authors such as Ahonen (2000, p.46) and Samuel (1999, p.227) who agree on the importance of love in conducting any type of mission. Pastors and workers have experienced the love from God through His deliverance for either themselves or their family. They then proclaim and share that love to other drug addicts as a way of showing personal love to drug addicts and gratitude to God. They thereby have both personal and social motives. For drug addicts, they are either touched by testimonies of the workers or by influence of their families. It appears that the program is not a forced one as the addicts have free choice to decide whether they participate in the program after hearing the testimonies. The exception was Loan’s case when her participation was not her free choice.

My second concern was what the ultimate goal of the program is, in the tension between evangelical and social goals of mission and tension between the motivation of love and the requirement of conversion. The pastors firmly say that evangelism is the first goal and transformation is the second goal. The reason why they are strict on keeping the requirement of conversion is “Jesus is the only solution for drug addictions”. They believe that drug deliverance is from transformation and transformation is from faith in God. We can understand this interacted influence on the other way around based on idea of the Kingdom. The Kingdom is both by grace and by faith in Christ. The Kingdom is “the present inner rule of God...in the heart” (Johnston, quoted in Cray 1999, p.26). And the Kingdom is the presence of righteousness, peace and joy<sup>38</sup>. Therefore, to be delivered from drugs is to be in the Kingdom. And to be in the Kingdom is to put faith in Jesus including repentance and discipleship according to the Bible. Hence, conversion is the prerequisite for participation and experience of transformation to be delivered from drugs. Although Pastor Sy applies the requirement less strictly than Pastor Cam as Pastor Sy lets non-believers stay in the clinic, Pastor Sy gives a period of at most three months in which they can convert to Christianity to receive the rehabilitation treatment. Consequently, these clinics are active and exclusive FBO type as letting conversion as precondition for participation and only give services to those who share the same faith.

My third concern was what made the Christian rehabilitation program different and achieve certain success compared to other programs. While the 16 rules are considered as contributing to form healthy routines for the addicts, all the interviewees including pastors, workers and drug addicts do not recognize them as a direct factor contributing to the rehabilitation. Rather, love experienced from God and the surrounding people as well as the Bible are two main factors. Remarkably, learning the Bible gives understanding of sins, being valued and accepted in Christ and helps drug addicts adopt a Christian lifestyle. Learning the Bible is an essential component of the program and being transformed by the words learnt from the Bible play a key role in the transformation process. In general, the program comprises of contributions of Trinity, pastors, clinic workers and drug addicts. The Trinity touches and calls pastors and workers to serve in the ministry as well as touches drug addicts. The pastors and workers share testimonies and evangelize while showing love and care towards drug addicts. The drug addicts responded by

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<sup>38</sup> Romans 14:17



putting faith in and reliance on God, and participate in the program with a desire to be transformed so that they will be delivered from drugs.

## **7.4. Answers to the research sub-questions**

### **7.4.1. Sub-question 1: How is transformation experienced by the pastors and clinic workers?**

My concern here was whether transformation is visible and if so, is how. According to the pastors and clinic workers, transformation can be observed through relationship with God. Transformation is visible in “whole-hearted attitude in worship time and a frequent prayer habit” as Pastor Sy said. Transformation is also observed through the love and care shown to the others and by breaking bad habits such as using slang. Hence, if faith in God is a condition of transformation, relationship with God is manifestation of faith and is catalyst for transformation. Faith in God activates transformation and relationship with God undergoes transformation. The more transformation the addicts experience, the more they express the desire to go deeper in the relationship with God. Consequently, a deeper visible relationship with God leads to a stronger and more complete experience of transformation.

Additionally, the Kingdom requires obedience and people who are in the Kingdom often have a desire to obey God as He is the Lord in every aspect of life. Therefore, obedience to God reflected through following the 16 rules and especially adhering to the Bible study schedule is another signal of transformation. It should be also noticed that workers gave more detailed descriptions of signals of transformation than the pastors did since they work closely and directly take care of the addicts.

### **7.4.2. Sub-question 2: How is transformation experienced by the drug addicts?**

My concern was how personal transformation was experienced by the addicts. In the detox stage, the addicts described an experience of peace and comfort in the power of the Spirit in the fight against withdrawal symptoms. The experience includes a feeling of being loved, cared for through the attentiveness and prayer received from the workers. In the recovery stage, the addicts described an experience of transformation in the feeling of being mentally fixed, sober and empowered to live a lifestyle of Christ-like standards. While the detox stage gives

experience of transformation through prayers, the recovery stage gives transformation through the Bible learnings.

#### **7.4.3. Sub-question 3: How transformation is understood by the pastors and clinic workers?**

Pastors and workers use the Bible verse in 2 Corinthians 5:17 to define transformation “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here”. Based on this verse, the pastors pointed out two main characteristics of transformation. First is the condition of being “in Christ” and second is the formation of new creation from the inside out. In addition, many metaphors are used by pastors and workers to illustrate the transformation such as the process of being from a caterpillar to a butterfly and from a wolf to a sheep.

#### **7.4.4. Sub-question 4: How transformation is understood by the drug addicts?**

My concern was once drug addicts experience the transformation, whether they understand what transformation is and how do they define it. After receiving teachings from the pastors and workers, the addicts have similar understanding of transformation although during the initial detox stage, they did not have such deep understanding. The way transformation is experienced, is explained by the addicts and presented in simple practical terms such as “I like things I hated before and I hate things I loved before” as Giang shared. Transformation is a desire and strength to stop having thoughts and actions that go against living a Christ-like life. Moreover, transformation is physical and spiritual; an inside-out change through the words of God.

#### **7.4.5. Sub-question 5: How the transformation process is evaluated by the pastors and workers?**

The two pastors claim that the program has a higher rate of success than other non-Christian rehabilitation programs. However, there is no guarantee for a 100% rate of success within the two-year program. The workers are less optimistic about the length of two years as being long enough to ensure full rehabilitation and they recommend a longer time required to stay in the clinics. They recommend extending the duration of rehabilitation program for two reasons. First, drug addiction is complicated and severely affect addicts’ physical and mental health.

Second, experience of transformation has no model in terms of timing. Rather, it depends on how quickly the addicts open their hearts and respond to the God's words and the love they experience in the clinics. Additionally, it depends on the work of the Spirit that is sometimes mysterious. It is also the pastors and workers' responsibility to organize the program including setting appropriate Bible study schedules for drug addicts so that transformation can be fostered.

#### **7.4.6. Sub-question 6: How the transformation process is evaluated by the drug addicts?**

The addicts are satisfied with the process experienced in the program. They confirmed they are in good health condition and have a desire to finish the two-year program. Moreover, they have started to share testimonies to other addicts and look for God's calling to serve in the ministry as workers.

### **7.5. Answers to the main research question**

The answers to the sub-questions contribute to the answer for the main research question: How is transformation understood and experienced by pastors, clinic workers and drug addicts as a means of delivering drug addicts from addiction in the Christian rehab program in Vietnam? Transformation is the condition of drug rehabilitation. In the interviewees' perspective, drug addiction is rooted in the mind is a consequence of having a broken relationship with God. Therefore, the solution for drug addiction is reconciliation with God by putting faith in Him and being transformed in spirit, body and mind. This is the manifesto of the Christian rehabilitation program.

Understanding of personal transformation is mostly gained from the Bible. Pastors, workers and drug addicts refer to 2 Corinthians 5:17 as definition of transformation. In addition to giving definition of transformation, the interviewees gave two characteristics of transformation with this Bible verse. First, the precondition of transformation is "in Christ". It reflects the requirement of both putting faith in Christ and living in Christian environment. Christian environment means living in the clinics to study the Bible and to live in love and care as a community with other Christians. The pastors and workers implied that these are reasons why those are put in the 16 rules. These are not only requirement for the addicts but also responsibility of the clinics to establish such an environment to foster transformation for the addicts and hence, their freedom from drugs.

Second, catalyst of transformation is the words of God. By learning the Bible, the addicts are aware of their wrongdoings. The words do not only show their sins but guides them and tells them what should be done. It gives them hope of being transformed and freed from drugs. Hence, the truth in the Bible brings transformation. They study the Bible, experience what is written in the Bible and have more passion to study the Bible more and to experience more.

Addicts' experience of transformation is observed by pastors and workers while being directly experienced by the drug addicts. Transformation is expressed and observed through relationship with God and with others. Pastors and workers conclude that a drug addict who is being transformed is the one who spends time to praying and studying the Bible individually. This is then expressed in "the whole-hearted" attitude in worship services and Bible study classes. Moreover, transformation can be observed through relationship with others when drug addicts show love and care towards the others.

It is hence observed that there is strong connection between transformation and relationship with God. First, faith in God activates transformation and relationship with God undergoes transformation. Ultimately, the more transformation the addicts experience, the more desire they have for going deeper in relationship with God. Consequently, a deeper relationship with God leads to a stronger and more complete experience of transformation. Transformation of drug addicts is experienced by them as power to ease the withdrawal symptoms in the detox stage and to change their mind through the words of God in the recovery stage. It is about an experience of putting desire of being delivered from drugs, reliance on God and to adapt Christ-like lifestyle.

Additionally, the role of the Holy Spirit and the Kingdom of God are two key themes running through all answers of the research questions. Regarding the starting point of the ministry, the Holy Spirit plays a key role in confirming and guiding pastors and workers to respond to the calling. The Spirit also plays the role of provenience by setting up certain conditions so that the addicts have opportunities to hear the testimonies and forming hope and curiosity to join the program. Regarding to the process of transformation, the Spirit equips and empowers the pastors, workers and addicts to the experience of transformation.

According to the participants in my research, the Kingdom of God contains transformation including healing, deliverance and recovery. To participate in the Kingdom of God, addicts are required to let God reigns in every aspect of their life. This explains the requirement of

conversion to join the program. Its character of “the already” and “the not yet” is also expressed in the Christian rehabilitation program. First, transformation is a process. The addicts experience “the already” and moving towards to experience “the not yet” of the transformation. Second, “the not yet” gives hope for the interviewees to keep being “in Christ” to experience the transformation more completely. Meanwhile, “the already” gives them a taste of transformation and confirm the truth of what they heard from the testimonies and from the Bible.

## 7.6. Outlook

In the process of searching for answers to the research question, there are some conclusions derived from my thesis that can offer insights into the deliverance ministry regarding to drug rehabilitation.

The goal of my thesis was to investigate transformation in the Christian rehabilitation program in Vietnam. The program claims to use transformation as the method for rehabilitation, therefore this thesis focuses on understanding how transformation is defined and understood by its participants: pastors, workers and addicts. This leads to an understanding of the program as a whole and provides insight as to how transformation works in ministry of deliverance. I believe there has not been any official research on these programs in Vietnam and on the concept of transformation in regards to this Christian drug rehabilitation program in Vietnam.

This thesis can provide insights which can be used to inspire Christians to participate in mission while emphasizing that all mission should be guided by love, the experience of God’s calling and the Spirit. The combination of these three elements that guide mission can lead to more sustainable committed way of doing mission. Second, each mission must be clear in setting and communicating goals. As long as a mission can be related to God, it is genuinely mission. Therefore, mission can focus on either evangelism or social action, but the clearly presented goals help build consistent objectives and action plans. Hence, it helps to avoid tension and confusion when doing mission in practice.

Providing the rehabilitation for drug addicts suggests a way for evangelism to be done. First, it shows that giving testimonies of one’s own life story is one of the most convincing evangelical methods. Secondly, it is more convincing to share testimonies with those who are in similar trouble, which is drug addiction in this case. Finally, evangelizing to drug addicts may lead to

a broader effect as it influences them as individuals, their families and their surrounding community.

Moreover, the thesis introduces a religious solution for the social vice of drug addiction. This Christian method is not new as it has been applied in some Asian countries such as Hong Kong. However, it may be new to some Western countries and to other religious or non-religious people. Transformation may sound religious and ambiguous but it can be understood and observed through addicts' personal experience. My thesis presents the findings coming primarily from twelve interviews and partly from observation. Therefore, the data is valid and trustworthy. People who are involved in drug addiction either by serving in rehabilitation programs or by those who suffer from addiction can refer to this research to gain understanding of transformation and its key factors contributing to Christian drug rehabilitation. Consequently, they might consider customizing and applying this model for their own cases. Although the setting of the thesis is Vietnam, model of the Christian rehabilitation program is possibly applicable in other areas which have similar culture to the Vietnamese. However, Christian communities can apply these insights of transformation more than other communities due to the focus on the Bible and the Spirit in activating the deliverance from drugs.

Additionally, testimonies of recovered addicts are more convincing as their transformation is often visible and noticeable. Hence, the proclamation and experience of transformation are multiplied more and more. Moreover, personal transformation strongly leads to social transformation in this case. Drug addiction involves severe social vices which negatively influence not the addicts themselves but their families and the society. Once they are transformed and delivered from drugs, families and the society experience less miseries such as robbery and prostitution. The addicts are hence expected to be good citizens and not cause problems for the society. They are supposed to be good citizens of which the society comprises. Thus, personal transformation leads to social transformation in that sense.

## **7.7. Further research**

In the scope of my thesis, I mainly focus on the rehabilitation happening in the Christian clinics. As a suggestion for a continuation of the thesis, I present three potential research projects. First, one could compare the program with other religious or secular rehabilitation programs. Secondly, one could follow-up on the after-care phase of the program and how transformation occurs in those stages. Finally, one could investigate more about how social transformation as the result of personal transformation of drug addicts.





## APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW GUIDES

Questions to pastors and clinic workers:

1. What motivates you (pastors) to open these clinics?
2. What motivates you (clinic workers) to work for the clinics?
3. What is your aim/main goal to achieve for this program?
4. What does the term “transformation” particularly mean to you?
5. What are key factors in this program helping to release patients from drug addiction? And why are they important?
6. The patients are required to follow the 16 rules to participate to the program. How were the 16 rules formulated and to what extent do they support for the transformation to take place?
7. What are your works in the clinics and what are your particular roles in the transforming process?
8. How do you evaluate the 16 rules helping in releasing drug addiction?
9. What are the signals indicating that a patient has been transformed?
10. How is the drug rehabilitation process evaluated in the end?

Questions to drug addicts:

1. How do you know about the program?
2. What motivates you to participate in the program?
3. How do you understand the term “transformation”, before and after you participate in the process?
4. Have you joined any other drug rehabilitation program? How can you compare these programs?
5. What is your opinion about the 16 rules?
6. How do you contribute to the rehabilitation process, passively or actively?
7. Will you follow the whole process? Why do you think so?
8. How can you compare your status (physical, mental and spiritual) between before and after participating in the program?

## APPENDIX 2: THE 16 RULES OF REBIRTH CLINICS

Clients of the Rebirth clinics are required to follow these rules:

1. You must believe and receive Jesus as Christ and the lord of your life.
2. You must have a national identity card.
3. You are not allowed to bring any addictive substances to the clinic and you must cooperate with the one who checks the contents of your luggage.
4. In the first month, you are under an absolute control. You are not allowed to be out of the clinic and you are not allowed to leave the premises without permission of the pastors and workers.
5. The minimum time you have to stay in the clinic are two years to finish the program.
6. When you are in the clinic, you are a member of God's family. Therefore, you should live by love to each other.
7. You must follow the task allocation, room allocation and any instructions from the pastors and workers.
8. You must follow the Bible learning schedule and activity schedule set by the pastors and workers.
9. You are not allowed to use any addictive substances.
10. You are not allowed to read newspapers, magazines, films and photos with negative content.
11. You are not allowed to use mobile phones without permission of the pastors and workers.
12. You are not allowed to use slang and swear words.
13. You are not allowed to play cards, chess or any type of gambling.
14. If you are married, you are allowed to meet your spouse with permission of the pastors and workers.
15. You are not allowed to use cash, wear jewelry or any valuable belongings.
16. You must keep the hygiene and preserve the facilities in the clinic because it belongs to God and also being your home.

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