

## SO WHO IS UNDERDEVELOPED?

I am increasingly becoming uncomfortable with countries being referred to as “Third World,” “Developing Nation,” or “Underdeveloped Country.” I hearken back to the time I spent in Nigeria. The valuable lessons I learned from the women there did not become evident to me until I returned to the States, after spending five years living and working very closely with the Nigerian women.

At that time, I was preparing a talk for a church women’s group and felt some stressors in my daily life—three children under the age of three, a husband in graduate school which meant little yearly income, and a schedule that was a bit too crowded---all of these were squeezing joy from my being. In my talk, as I described the daily existence of women in this “developing” country, I began to realize that their stress factors were more than inconveniences, but many times life-or-death matters. Their backbreaking daily rituals to produce food and care for their children (some of whom would not live to one year of age), having to walk further and further for firewood and other necessities of life, snakebites, water-borne diseases, political upheaval, were part and parcel of their living. BUT—the difference between them and me was that while there was not lusty singing coming from my mouth, their bodies were moving and swaying with a song of praise in gratitude for God’s goodness to them, even as they pounded the grain they had farmed and walked the long distances for the necessities of life.

So who is underdeveloped? Yes, their development level may be one of a very basic standard of living and physical infrastructure, but in no way are the women underdeveloped in their recognition of who God is and how God sustains them minute by minute throughout their lives.

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