

The Lovelight Stories

PODCAST

Ep: 13 | How to Really Help the Materially Poor with Kurt Kandler | The 410 Bridge
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00:02.85

lovelightstories

Kurt welcome to the love light stories podcast I am so happy to have you here today.

00:07.20

Kurt Kandler

So umm I'm I'm the one that's delighted to be here. It's been a long time coming. Thanks for having me.

00:12.13

lovelightstories

Yes, you know we've known each other for quite a few years now and you have an organization that you started called the fortin bridge and I just have. Absolutely loved your organization because of the way that you go about in helping people who actually really need help and you do it differently? Um, and before we get into that I want to say that um you have a book. Called if you really want to help that's outlining all of that so we're going to be talking about some of the concepts that you talk about here in that book today but I want before we get into that I want to dive into your story because in the book you do such a great job outlining. How this started and where it's coming from and your experiences in that. So can you help us understand your story a bit.

01:02.29

Kurt Kandler

Sure so I'll you know try to keep that as succinct as possible because it's you know there's there's stories within stories. But you know my my history is you know I'm ah I'm a business guy I'm ah um, um, a marketplace guy. My career has been fairly entrepreneurial. Um, well really entrepreneurial and I think that's just ah, ah, a really nice way of saying that I realized early on in my career that I wasn't going to make a very good employee and so I wanted I think I just wanted to do my own thing and so I love um when you know presented with an idea. To go and create and a business around that idea if that if that idea provides value to a potential potential market and so I did that throughout my career. Um and in right after 119 the business I had at the time was a direct marketing agency here in Atlanta we employed about 45 people and you know it was ah it was a big marketing agency direct marketing agency and ah after nine eleven that that business just tanked. It felt like it happened overnight.

02:06.30

lovelightstories

Ah.

02:08.44

Kurt Kandler

Lot of our businesses. A lot of our ah clients went out of business and I was found in this place without a job and without any income and lots and lots of personally guaranteed debt and in the book I refer to that as kind of our family's dark times I know a lot of people.

02:19.87

lovelightstories

Yeah.

02:24.60

Kurt Kandler

A lot darker times than we did ah for a variety of reasons. But for us this was this was a really really low point I had three kids at the time all in you know, elementary school and so long and short of it is is that at our kids' school. It was a small little christian school here in Atlanta that we actually helped start. Um, they were doing a project in Uganda ah, just a little shoebox thing they would put get shoeboxes and they're supposed to put toys and school supplies and letters or whatever in these boxes and um I didn't really wasn't terribly interested in that I remember hearing about at the dinner table dinner. Table time was super important for our family growing when the kids were growing up and but a family from that school went took these boxes over to Uganda they went and delivered them. They came back I found them in my home having dessert and coffee with a bunch of other people and he was showing pictures of what he did in Uganda and it was not on my radar. I had much bigger fish to fry I had lots of problems. Lots of issues a bit panicked. Um and he showed a picture of a school in Uganda Middle of Nowhere Uganda was made on mud and sticks and cow dung and dirt floors and kids sat on rocks and there were no teachers no supplies, no books.

03:23.62

lovelightstories

M.

03:37.15

Kurt Kandler

Rickety desks and I was like he said every time that rains the the walls crumble and the community has to kind of repack the walls and I'm like that just seems silly to me. Why don't they just build a brick building and so the next morning I was in my quiet time and.

03:43.10

lovelightstories

Um.

03:45.43

lovelightstories

Yeah.

03:52.85

Kurt Kandler

I was convicted again. Lots of story within story here but I was convicted that I needed to go do something about that and again I think the book goes into a lot more detail about that. But I was convicted that my I was supposed to go I should go build them a brick building Now that's a really hard decision to do when you're out of work.

04:06.15

lovelightstories

Um, yeah.

04:10.67

Kurt Kandler

Making no money working out of your basement trying to cobble together a living and have all this debt piling up but I I was committed to go do that and so we went and did that eighteen months later and when I was there I just was exposed to extreme poverty for the first time I am a typical american.

04:13.99

lovelightstories

Thing.

04:30.34

Kurt Kandler

Guy that wants to go help and I feel like I have the money now and the idea that I'd raise the money and I have the idea of what these people need and I went over there to go do that thinking that I was going to make a difference for a generation or 2 and ah realized after a couple days that what we were doing was of no moment that it didn't matter. There's.

04:47.48

lovelightstories

E.

04:49.85

Kurt Kandler

Problems were massive and my little school building that I was building and it was doing a little water project too was just really not helpful. It was helpful but it wasn't going to solve any problem that I thought it was solving and so that's kind of the backdrop for coming home.

04:59.24

lovelightstories

Right.

05:05.68

Kurt Kandler

And again being really convicted having some defining moments in my life around I needed to go figure out a better way to and go engage the poor or there was a better way I didn't need to figure out but there was a better way to engage the poor and ah, again, convicted to go do that and that was kind of the genesis of 4 10 bridge realizing that. You know we have to rethink how we are helping the poor because more often. What I've learned over the twenty years now almost is that we actually do more harm than good or well-intentioned our hearts are were in the right place but our tactics are really really broken for a variety of reasons.

05:34.34

lovelightstories

Yeah.

05:42.40

lovelightstories

Right? Ok, what was it specifically when you were there that helped you realize that what you were doing was not actually going to really help them.

05:45.30

Kurt Kandler

And yeah, that's kind of how it started.

05:57.35

Kurt Kandler

Well then I would say back then I was using different language than I use today. But the the problem and the identification of the solutions were were the same and that I would say you know I was walking around this community and um, nobody was helping us. We had contracted some guys to help us lay bricks for the school building but nobody was helping us the community was not engaged at this solution. Um, and I was I remember saying you know thinking to myself and and guys this can be misinterpreted. Um, so hopefully you hear my heart in this. But. You know why did they think the way they think why are the men sitting around doing nothing when we're building this school building and they're not helping why are the women in the community doing everything they're running their households. They're running in business. They're watching the livestock they're working in the farms and the men are kind of sitting around like what.

06:35.93

lovelightstories

Yeah.

06:49.83

Kurt Kandler

Why do people think the way they think that was the biggest surprise to me that I was of what I was thinking when I was over there is is that people's perspectives were were broken. Why why did they have the perspective that they have.

07:00.60

lovelightstories

Right.

07:04.42

Kurt Kandler

And you know I say it very differently today and I haveve come to learn to understand that in ah in ah in a better way today. But that's that was the that was the thing that captured me our school building while a physical thing was going to be helpful to the kids and the water project was was going to be okay.

07:12.84

lovelightstories

Right.

07:21.33

Kurt Kandler

That wasn't going to solve a poverty problem I was going to solve a water problem or an education problem school building problem but not a poverty problem and I thought I was helping solve a poverty problem.

07:21.88

lovelightstories

Right.

07:29.94

lovelightstories

Got it so that was kind of the turning point at which you came back home and you were like Okay, what I was thinking I was going to do to help actually isn't really going to help solve the poverty Problem. What can we do to think differently to actually solve. Real underlying issue and that led to like you said the genesis of the 4 10 bridge. Okay, Okay, so let's let's dive into that a little bit and your model and how you begin working with communities because.

07:53.89

Kurt Kandler

Um.

08:03.41

lovelightstories

I know that you go in and work really closely with communities establish a leadership council all of that. So Can you give us an overview of the process and help us kind of understand how you truly empower these communities to lead themselves. And I'm talking about an overview but also some of the specific things to help us really understand like what it is you do.

08:24.67

Kurt Kandler

Okay, okay, again, that's 45 minutes in and of itself but let me encapsulate it so there's a couple key principles that we are we're're. We're an organizations very disciplined on key fundamental principles. We call them our guiding principles.

08:28.23

lovelightstories

Yeah.

08:40.87

Kurt Kandler

And those guiding principles are important because we're in a very emotional space people are suffering in a lot of different ways and emotion can take over and so we need to have these guardrails in place that keep us focused on what we've been called to go do and so one of the principles is first that we are invited into a community. We don't just show up because there are needs then we think we can help with those needs I just showed up in bo allli because some organization out of Kamalla thought that you know they needed a school building or I saw a school building and I wanted to solve that problem so fourtime bridge is invited first once we're invited. We're very clear that we're really not here to do anything for you which is sounds a little

heartless but that's a comma. Ah we're not here to really do anything for you but we are here to do with you and um, we found that. We can go a long way together if you establish leaders of your community. So we create a leadership council left. We're invited. We create a leadership council that can be elected. It can be appointed. However, it is but there's a group of leaders that we want that represent all of the constituents within their community. Women not just men but women the youth the elderly um and that is the group of people that are going to work with us closely to move toward outcomes that they desire not outcomes that we see so so far we haven't talked anything about needs. We've just.

10:13.48

Kurt Kandler

But invited into help which changes the conversation from an outsider coming in to an insider because we've been invited. We established leaders and then we go through an assessment process. That's pretty cool around just trying to understand the community. What's going on in the community. What what are their strengths. What are their gifts. What are their assets. Um, what do they do? so well they could teach others. Um, what do they love about their community. What do they live about living here I always say to them like if you know if I were going to move here to your community tell me why I should want to live here and it just again changes the conversation from needs. And deficits to strengths you start there? Um, and then we ultimately move to um, you know if you could change 1 thing in your community. What's the 1 thing that you would want to change what what would you not want your children or grandchildren to deal with that. You're currently dealing with today.

10:50.53

lovelightstories

Yes.

11:08.73

Kurt Kandler

And you only can have 1 thing to start. It's just what's your top priority and they work together as a group of leaders over a extended period of time to figure out what what is that? 1 thing and let's say that it's water because they don't have clean safe water. Let's just hypothetically say that's the case. Well then we move into what we call kind of. And an empowerment analysis which basically says hey look if you have a water problem and that's your number 1 problem and you want to solve that what is the solution that you think needs to be put in place to solve that problem how much of that solution. Can you do on your own. How much of that solution. Do you need help from outsiders and how much of that solution is outside of anyone's control and that starts getting them to think about what their responsibility is to solve their problem and what we say is things like look the water problem that exists in your community doesn't exist in my community and the solution to your water problem.

11:47.60

lovelightstories

Right.

12:03.38

Kurt Kandler

Doesn't exist in my community either. It exists right here in your community and we're helping you to pull us into that solution. So I'll just finish with this idea of the rope I talk about it. The rope in the book and it's a great kind of object lesson and if I'm if we're our staff me whatever are in a group. Ah, in a community with a group of leaders and I said look if you have a need and I throw

you a rope and you're hanging onto one end of the rope and I have the hanging on the other end of the rope and we pull that rope tight if we try to push you. We're not going to go very far. But if you pull us meaning you want to lead and um, you know. You're a good leader. We want to follow you. We can go a long way together. But you have to pull which means we're not coming in to tell you what we're going to do for you. You need to tell us where do you want to go 105 years from today and let's help you get to that that place and that is a paradigm shift of how we. Engage the poor. So what we learned early on is is that we can't be successful over there without assistance from the west but we also can't be successful over there unless we change this paradigm how the west engages the poor and so there's two sides to the bridge and that's what we do but in the community they have to pull they have to lead. We have to humble ourselves to let them lead. Let them make mistakes and when we do that we can go a long way together.

13:22.63

lovelightstories

Yes, I Love what you said is that they can't do all of it without support from the west but the West can't really help them without them leading themselves and help us understand why that is a little bit more Like. Why is it that we can't just go in with these solutions and and just solve it for them.

13:45.92

Kurt Kandler

Um, because um it you know ah we rise and fall on our definitions. Um, that's a fundamental principle for us if we're going to have a if there's a problem that we've identified we better right? We we better define it well or what that's a business. Just a classic kind of business approach is like if you're know if you're going to solve a problem. How do you define that problem because you could put a solution in place that defines a different problem and so it starts with and again we rise and fall on our definitions. So it starts our with our definition of poverty. Um and forte bridge doesn't define poverty as a material problem. It's a issue of worldview. What I would say back in Uganda was people's perspectives today I talked about it and using the word the term worldview. It's an issue of how people think um and what we've learned is is that um, people's worldview. The story they're telling themselves to be true. The conversation they're having in their head their perspective drive the choices they make and those choices drive the actions people take all over the world. You have a worldview I have a worldview and we have choices based on that story. We're telling ourselves to be true.

14:45.77

lovelightstories

Yes.

14:56.27

Kurt Kandler

And that has more to do with whether or not a group of people will live in deprivation or thrive more than anything else in my experience and so yes, do they need resources. Yes, do they need infrastructure. Yes, do we help them build capacity. Of course we do.

15:03.14

lovelightstories

Wow.

15:12.70

Kurt Kandler

But just coming in and identifying a need and solving a problem see a problem solve a problem is not going to solve the poverty problem again I ask organizations all the time when they come to me and say hey how can you help us move toward and and kind of but move toward a 4 10 bridge Methodology. And I'm saying well first what is what problem are you looking to solve and they say we're trying to solve a poverty problem like yeah, not really, you may be trying to solve an education problem maybe trying to solve a water problem but not a poverty problem and how do you define poverty and most Americans most westerners Define poverty as a financial material problem and it is not in my view The other. Other definition. That's super important is how you define development and in our world. How we define development is development is that which people do for themselves. It's not what outsiders come in and do for people. It's what people do on their own so we don't measure our success by what we do, We measure our success by what the community does on its own. That's true development that's going to what is what's going to make their poverty solutions sustainable for them long after we leave and so that's why a western organization can't come in see a problem solve a problem because then it's an outsider's solution. It's not their own. They don't own it. They don't see it as their own.

16:15.31

lovelightstories

Yes.

16:27.77

Kurt Kandler

If it breaks or if it just falls apart or if it just doesn't continue. They don't see it as their problem. They see it or their solution. They see it as somebody outside their community came in and did this to help us. But it's It's not our solution and so that's why that doesn't work and then is littered with that.

16:41.10

lovelightstories

Right.

16:45.80

Kurt Kandler

Yeah Hades A great example of that.

16:45.53

lovelightstories

Right? And and sometimes because those solutions aren't working. They're just abandoned like like you've kind of mentioned. Okay, so now how how does the community actually lead and participate. Can you give us some examples of what they do.

16:52.68

Kurt Kandler

Right.

17:03.41

lovelightstories

To cut like you're coming alongside of that but they're leading.

17:04.53

Kurt Kandler

Yeah, it almost it all comes back to 2 again fundamental principles. 1 is a leadership council have to have indigenous volunteer not paid but volunteer leaders who have a vision for their community and are prepared to go mobilize and unify their community toward their development goals. That's super important. Well when they mobilize and unify their community around the development goals that they have that just inherently gets the community involved in the solutions starts solving their own problem. Um, and so um, community participation in every program is super important. Um, whether it's an infrastructure thing like a school building or a water project or something that needs to be built. They need to but participate in the building of that so that they see that as their own. It's not ours. It's theirs their community their problem their solution now if it's. A capacity building program like business training or farming training or schooling or whatever it might be um, you know they're obviously they're participating because they're being trained but just because you're trained this is another flaw I think by many a lot of western solutions is they'll do training.

18:10.20

lovelightstories

Yes.

18:20.10

Kurt Kandler

Um, but there's really no fruit from that training. So We we want people in our community to come to our entrepreneurship training business training or how to start a small business but then be in business and so one of the other fundamental philosophies. Principles that we have that speaks to this is that we are you know I believe that organizations need to be outcome-based not process-based by that I mean is you know I don't care how many trainings we run in a community are we are those trainings. Achieving the outcomes that the community wants for example, um, average household income in one of our communities is under \$2 a day when we start well at what level provides them the capacity to go solve their own problems put their kids in school and pay school fees.

18:56.15

lovelightstories

Right.

19:13.44

Kurt Kandler

Have a water tap in their home move from firewood to propane. Whatever it might be. They need a certain amount of income to do that and they also need to think differently about that income. What does god say about money. What does it say we talk about savings we talk about generosity. We talk about things like like that as it relates to business. But. I don't care if we want run run one training or a hundred trainings. The trainings aren't what's um, are are what not are isn't what we're going to measure. It's going to be the outcome that we're achieving and so many organizations begin to measure or continue to measure what they've always done. Without really looking at are they achieving the outcomes that they've been called to go achieve and when we're set out to solve a poverty problem. The only way to solve a poverty problem in my opinion is holistically all areas physically spiritually socially relationally all of those things have to be done holistically. And how do you know? if you've gotten to a place where they are no longer living in extreme poverty. That's the question and forget and then any programs that you run need to go cheap. Go need to go drive toward those outcomes. It's complicated, but it's really cool when it when it happens.

20:15.58

lovelightstories

Right.

20:25.11

lovelightstories

Yes, Okay, let's dive into that a little bit this holistic development because you've you've mentioned a couple examples where you're like we're not just going to do a well project or build a school that's not solving poverty and so what you're saying is that in order to really create. Allow Community development to Happen. You have to do it from a holistic standpoint and they are interdependent amongst themselves the different projects that you do So Can you explain this this infrastructure capacity that you have and then the people capacity and how those different programs.

20:51.61

Kurt Kandler

You put bread.

21:02.81

lovelightstories

Are interdependent to create this holistic development model.

21:07.65

Kurt Kandler

Yeah, great question so you know, um, there are there is this again interdependency as you've talked about it between all of these areas of. Ah, need and solutions to solve those problems. They're interdependent and so there is a so a sequential look at this? Um, and it starts with it's really, we are capacity builders right? We're trying to help people build capacity. Well if children women and children are walking. 5 hours every day to go access their daily water that is unsafe, um, unsafe meaning it makes them sick. Not only are they taking all that time to go get the water but then they're coming back and they're ill. They're not going to school. They're not running small businesses. They don't have the capacity. To go do these things to self-develop because they're spending all their time on water so that is typically what we call kind of infrastructure capacity. What are infrastructural things in a community that people need that would lift their capacity to go do the other things that they need to do to move and to continue to develop and so it's typically in.

21:57.58

lovelightstories

Right.

22:14.88

Kurt Kandler

I'm thinking about it in a african east african context water is a big deal. People are walking long distances for water every day taking in them hours before they can go to school before they can go run a business or take care of their household or tend to their farms and so when we solve a water problem. By bringing water closer and distributing it among the community. The outcome that a leader leaders will typically say as an example would be something like we really? Yeah, we asked the question when are we finished when are you finished with water. Well if we could get 80% of our households. They'd say. To have access to clean safe water within a 10 minute walk of their homes that would be awesome because right now they're walking 3 and 4 hours

well that's the outcome. So what is the solution to drive to that outcome. Ah and as opposed to seeing a water problem and going and putting in a prefabbed water solution a shallow well or something. We think we're solving the problem but we're really not solving the problem they need. So once we build their capacity physically well then we move to and that could be also they don't have a school they don't have school buildings they don't have a clinic they don't have some infrastructure that occupies or limits their capacity to develop. Once we do those things and kind of simultaneous to doing those things we can go start doing human capacity things like training. How do you run a small business How do you farm more effectively. How do you improve the quality of education in the school. How do you create.

23:44.86

Kurt Kandler

Um, trainings and learnings to create make a healthier community. Well if you have clean, safe water that solves a lot of the health problems if you solve an education problem that solves some health problems if you're solving an income problem wealthier. People are typically healthier people and so there's there's just this. Integration between these solutions that you get a multiplicative impact inside a community when you go holistically if we were a water organization. Want to do water Solutions. We could do that anywhere in the world. But what problem are we Solving. We're not solving a poverty Problem. We're solving a water Problem. So That's how we that's how we see it and.

24:18.64

lovelightstories

Right.

24:23.35

Kurt Kandler

And again in everything that we do and I think I'm not made a big enough point in this but in everything that we are doing and that I've just outlined. There is a worldview training a worldview shift ah teaching ah that helps helps people think differently about themselves the relationship with God The relationship with each other the relationship with their environment. Um. Their neighbors. Ah that help them think differently so that they can sustain their development long after we leave. That's that's the secret sauce to solve in the poverty problem.

24:50.35

lovelightstories

Yes, yes, and so it's the worldview perspective and also you mentioned their relationship with God I know that their um faith in biblical training is a key aspect by which. You introduce these concepts as well of the the self-actualization and um, human dignity and things like that can you just explain a little bit of how how you use faith to um, come alongside these programs and partner with the churches.

25:18.57

Kurt Kandler

Well, it's it's the foundation I mean. Okay so I'm ah you know I'm a I'm a follower of Jesus and pastor my church says you know Jesus makes life better and makes me better at life and I just I believe that to be true I've seen that to be true I've seen too much of my life not to not I've seen evidence of that.

25:35.18

lovelightstories

She.

25:37.74

Kurt Kandler

And um, and so it's the foundation of everything we do yet. The the challenge is in these communities is is that there are churches in these communities and we want the local church to be the hero of this development effort. But most people don't go to church. In these communities. So how do we bring a biblical worldview Christian biblical worldview that says god loves me. He's created me for a purpose. Um I'm forgiven and therefore I should be a forgiver. Ah. And I have responsibilities I have responsibilities to be a godly father godly mother godly spouse godly parent godly schoolteacher godly leader godly doctor godly business owner. How do you do that when most people only get that from their local church but seventy ish percent of the people in our communities in Kenya. Don't attend really attend church. Especially the men. Well, that means that in every program that we want run. We want to bring god's truth to people that's relevant to the program that they're being trained on and let me give you some examples I always give and that is one in our in our business startup training this is training of. 25 to 50 people who are learning how to run a profitable small business and there's basic business skills that they're taught but as good as those are if we just created businesses businesses that were run in a secular way. We will not have been successful and so we're teaching them about what god says about money.

27:07.23

Kurt Kandler

What does he say about generosity. What does he say about resources that he's given you that he wants you to start with what you have you have everything that you need in front of you to change the quality of your life. But it's because you think the way you think that you don't see that.

27:12.86

lovelightstories

Yes.

27:23.35

Kurt Kandler

What does god say about your relationships with your neighbors your neighbors or your customers. You can't have a successful business without customers and if everybody in in in your in your community hates you because you are a cheat you're you're not honest and you're just trying to take advantage of people. Um, you know you're not going to have a successful business so you have to repair those relationships. You know what does god say about wealth you know a classic worldview on wealth is that it's a 0 sum game Stephanie if you're rich. My worldview is that you got that from somebody else and because you're wealthy. Someone else is poor. We have to shift that worldview. That's not true god wants us to live an abundant life. We that we have a we have abundance and it is and it can grow. It's not 0 sum. How do we change all that in the context of business so that the local churches no longer are this house of no where they go to hear. Ah you know all the things they can't do and and the church has actually become attractive to people.

28:17.66

Kurt Kandler

We do it in farming we do it in our education programs in our business programs and some health programs everything that we do has that biblical worldview component to it and again I

can't say it enough. That's the secret sauce in my experience to sustaining the solutions to move people out of extreme poverty to a place where they can self-develop. They have to think differently. And we want them and we think I think that god created things with order. He created things with a purpose and if we can get people to see that um and to follow Jesus as ah, you know he will make he will make life better and make them better at life. And those they'll do more to solve their poverty problem without us than they will with us. That's my um I'll go to deathbed on that one.

28:56.57

lovelightstories

Yes, yes, and and ultimately God is is the creator of everything and he's the one we can lean on and and again it's It's not leaning on an organization from the west like the 4 10 Bridge. It's.. It's realizing I have everything I need within myself community and with God supporting us and I know you you? Yes, yes and I know you talk about that. Um, even in more depth in in your book here. So Um I Just I think that I'm so glad you.

29:16.26

Kurt Kandler

Um, you know Covid will fight.

29:28.68

lovelightstories

You really went in depth on that concept because it is the like you said the secret sauce of what creates that change in worldview and so you have the faith as the foundation you're changing worldviews you're diving deep in communities through a holistic model. You. Do um, different projects and programs across water and Health and education economic development foundations for farming business training all of these areas that then create this picture of a community that's leading themselves in their own development and I mean it's just.

30:02.32

Kurt Kandler

Um, yep.

30:05.79

lovelightstories

Such a beautiful depiction of of honoring human dignity and and allowing them to flourish like helping them realize they have what they need to flourish and that they don't need you. And and so anyway I want to go into a couple of stories because you actually highlight a lot of stories in this book. But there's a couple just diving into these different um programs that you have that I think really helped depict like what it is like. The the success of of what's happening here. So um, one of them is Lucy's story she's the one where um, you mentioned that people have to walk for miles and not only was she walking for miles but she was like not getting very much sleep. She was getting up super early in the morning. And going on this dangerous water journey. Can you just explain that a little bit and help us understand that.

30:56.56

Kurt Kandler

Yeah I mean Lucy is our longest tenured staff member over there been with us for 2008 she worked she grew up in this community called Gamba that fortin bridge works in and that's how we met Lucy and. She worked their way through school and ultimately wanted to go help other communities and so she's been on staff with 4 10 over there for a while but she would tell the

story of ah her mother would wake her up very early in the morning. There was no water in Gamba. Um, and there was a private well on a ranch. Um. You know private ranch that raised raised livestock. Don't think of a ranch as in a you know Yellowstone Ranch it's just a you know livestock. But they had water and but it was ah ah the community was not. It was against the law to access that water and the owner of that. Um. Close that water source off to the community and so they would have to go steal that water sneak and get that water so she'd get up at three o'clock three thirty every morning and her and her mother would walk to you know with Jerry cans on their on their head and on these straps and they would walk to go get this water and she would. Reason it was dangerous. Is you know back in that day. There were um, Buffalo cape buffalo ah that are very dangerous, especially when they're alone and they be. You know it's it's pitch dark. There's no electricity There's no lights. There's no nothing. It's just pitch black and she would walk every every morning or every other day to get this water source.

32:23.91

Kurt Kandler

And her mother would put her kind of off to the sidewa. She ran into the ranch filled up her water container and then come back and get Lucy's and you know she would tell me her tell her times she come face to face with a water buffalo or a capo ah or some other animal. Um, that was super dangerous and so.

32:34.40

lovelightstories

E.

32:42.96

Kurt Kandler

For Lucy you know that is a very real memory for her that is that is the way life was now did she know any different at the time she knew no different. She never dreamed that her community would have have to not do that now. She's a mother of multiple children today and she's married and she's.

32:55.93

lovelightstories

Right.

33:01.97

Kurt Kandler

You know she's amazing. Um, but um, today she looks at Gamba Gamba has been graduated from the for 10 bridge relationship and they have sustainable, clean, safe water projects around their community that are distributed around the community. That pay for themselves that they sustain them and people are and young children are no longer making that walk now that may seem like just a project and just solving the water problem while that's true until you solve that problem the children gathering water is typically relegated to the children and the women in the community. They don't have the capacity to get and to go do anything else schooling running a business anything else so you can't just stop there and that's what Lucy sees she saw the cumulative effect of doing all of these solutions that are interdependent and again you get ah you get a multiplicative of impact. From it and she saw that firsthand in her community and she shares that story. She shared that story with us I tried to stare share it as much as I could in the book and ah you know she's one. She's super grateful but she also understands this is how.

34:08.56

Kurt Kandler

My Neighbors my community will never go back to being in extreme poverty ever again because it not only was the physical things that were done but it was also their ownership of those solutions their sustainability indigenous sustainability of those solutions and then also that they think differently about about. Where they're headed and where they're going and how to get there. They're doing that on their own.

34:29.39

lovelightstories

Yes, yes, and that's exactly what what you hope for in in what you're doing It's just incredible that the model is actually working. Um, okay so here's another story I mean there's so many stories all of them in the book are so incredibly good and we're not going to be able to cover all of them. So for those listening I really do encourage you to go get this book and read it because you're going to be so energized and excited to hear and read these stories of this model working. Um, but 1 another story that I want to want to highlight is Stephen and sabina they're a husband and wife yes, yes, yes, and.

35:03.75

Kurt Kandler

I'm so glad has bring up I'm really glad you got that one.

35:07.73

lovelightstories

And foundations for farming is really the program that Stephen got involved with but it really what it did mostly was was change his life and how he showed up in his marriage and with his family so dig into that a little bit.

35:19.42

Kurt Kandler

So ah, it's it's my favorite I love marriage I love family I love that just it's just is. It's just a just a I just love it and so we met Stephen. He also was in gamba by the way the same community that Lucy grew up in and Stephen ah would tell you that he was a drunkard he was worthless. These are his words not mine I was worthless I was a drunkard I did not work I hung out with the other men in the community. And whatever money my wife Sabina made I would steal it from her and go and buy a local brew and I would be drunk all day that was who Stephen was and sabina his wife was she doesn't even like to talk about those years because they were so difficult.

36:01.42

lovelightstories

And.

36:14.11

Kurt Kandler

Um, where she could never get ahead. Her kids were suffering because they couldn't pay school fees any little bit of money that she would would make by through day labor in some way he would spend and um we were presented with an opportunity to take 30 farmers from gamba.

36:23.17

lovelightstories

Please.

36:32.86

Kurt Kandler

And send them to Zimbabwe to learn foundations for farming and basically foundations for farming is a spinoff of farming god's way but that pretty much says what it is. It's farming god's way god made the soil to work in a certain way. These are the techniques that you can do to maximize your yields from your farm. And it's a really powerful ah technical training for for small so small scale farmers but that in and of itself isn't the solution. The solution is is that um you know. God made things to work a certain way. He made them in order and he made them created them with order and you got to do things on time at a standard without waste with joy. He's the creator of all things and he wants to have a relationship with you and this changed Steven's life ah incredibly where he came back.

37:24.91

Kurt Kandler

And he um made amends with his wife. He went to work. He employed. He deployed the training that he learned for foundations for farming. Ah she went and did our business startup training and when I when I did the book and went back and I wanted to interview them because I just love them and ah. And I I ask him hey how did you think before four 10 bridge arrived and how do you think today and they would say things like this is what they told me zi kurt we will. We will never go back to being poor again. Um we are not going to be a burden to our children because in our society.

37:55.19

lovelightstories

Um.

38:00.51

Kurt Kandler

Once The parents reach a certain age. The children are are called to care for Them. We're not.. We're not going to be a burden to our children look at my Farm. He's got in a massive farm now growing all sorts of things. She's a successful business person. They're training and leading other people in our community not because they necessarily just learn the skills but because they think differently. About their relationship with God The relationship with each other the relationship with their environment and their community and it is an amazing story which I did not do Justice with here for here. But it's in the book and hopefully that the story in the book does it does a better job.

38:30.47

lovelightstories

Yes, exactly it. It is just an absolutely incredible story and you mentioned how they're now training and mentoring others in the community and we don't need to get into the stories here. But there are multiple stories where that is actually happening where people have realized their ability. Once they they realize that they have the success inside of them and they learn how to do these different programs. They then are mentoring others in their community to do the same which is that ripple effect of generosity that's stemming from these programs rooted in human dignity and the principles of god. And um, that's why I I think what you're doing is like like we've talked about so much more than just poverty alleviation and community development I mean people's lives are changing um through these biblical principles and um, it's just really really incredible another story that I want to mention is the story of Honduras this community in Honduras they went through the asset mapping at the very beginning of your program and realized they could solve their own problem and you never even had to help them. Do it.

39:42.35

Kurt Kandler

Right? Exactly exactly it was ah it was a it was a complete shift in their thinking and and just very quickly. They identified I said earlier you know what's the 1 thing that you want to change if you could change something they identified roads. Ah they were loing on a top of a mountain and they had. Dairy and a lot of product, coffee and things but they could never get any of that stuff down to market because the roads up this mountain took almost an hour to get up and they were just awful and so we went through this empowerment analysis of how much of the road solution. Can you do on your own. How much of the road solution. Do you need help from outsiders. And how much of the road solution is beyond. Anyone's control was this that was that simple kind of ah of an exercise. But ultimately the question becomes well who are these outsiders that and if and they they identified that they they thought they could do 40% of the road solution on their own but they needed 60% of the solution from outsiders. The question is well who are the outsiders is that four ten bridge are you looking for us to come in and help you with the roads. Are you not going to do your 40% before you look for somebody to come in and do their 60 and who are these outsiders. Well you know government could help us. There's other organizations. Okay, whose responsibility is it to go find. You know the government official to go help you or this other organization to help you and they realize that it's their responsibility as leaders to be advocates for their community to go solve their problems on their own and so they're really one ah hundred percent responsible for their solutions and that's what they did literally two months later

41:15.71

Kurt Kandler

Came back to that community and the road was was fixed and they they said to us look We just never thought that way before we were always thinking. It was the government's responsibility to solve this for us and we would just complain that they weren't doing it when you showed us that it's our responsibility and that we're empowered to go solve these solutions on our own. We went to the government and said look we'll do 40% if you do 60% and the mayor said great I'll do that and they fix the road and ah now that's a very quick simple ah approach to a you know explanation of it but that really is fundamentally. It. You know we have to get people's worldview to shift.

41:39.92

lovelightstories

Yes.

41:54.23

Kurt Kandler

To a place where it's a Christian biblical worldview that says they can they should and whether they again whether you think you can or think you can't You're right that type of thing you know they can they should and when they get that they'll do more without us than they do they will with us.

42:08.80

lovelightstories

Yes, yes I love it so much and I've heard you say many times too that it's not just their worldview that needs to change. But it's also the worldview in the West let's dig into that quickly.

42:09.98

Kurt Kandler

And that's that's the beautiful part of our of our model I think.

42:17.20

Kurt Kandler

Um, oh um, a big learning when I wrote this book was um, you know a lot of. Empowerment A couple principles is that you can't empower people against their will you could put them in ah, an environment that's empowering but unless they claim their empowerment unless they own it. You know nothing you're going to do is going to get them to be empowered. They have That's true for any human being right.

42:49.28

lovelightstories

Yep.

42:49.82

Kurt Kandler

And well why aren't they claiming their empowerment. Well one of the one of the worldviews is a victim mentality look at all the things that happened to me you should have some empathy and sympathy for me because of all these things that are happening to me. It's outside of my control that all these things are happening to me. And that's got a shift and I think the learning for me has been that you know one you can't empower people against their will. But if the poor broadly speaking is a label if the poor see themselves as victims and are they're going to always be looking to outsiders to solve. Problem for them but in the west if we see them as victims. They don't have the capability of solving their problem on their own. We're never going to be able to empower them against their will what we have to change on our side of the bridge is that these are capable industrious. Wonderful joyful people that can teach us more about what it means to have joy in the midst of having nothing than anything we could teach them and we have to change how we see them not as a set of problems to be solved. But seeing them as the solution to their poverty problem and when you don't no longer see the poor as a set of problems to be solved water problem education problem Health Health problem when you don't see them as a set of problems to be solved anymore and see them as a solution your paradigm shifts. You want them to lead. You're going to follow.

44:16.40

Kurt Kandler

You know, let them and make mistakes you're not going to go do for them. You're going to do with them but that starts over here and so many times I've seen way too many organizations most of them see them as the savior for the poor and therefore that means we got to come in and save the day for them and I think. Bob Lupton is book toxic charity. He says when you do something for someone that has the capacity to do it for themselves. You disempower them that is the core opposite of what we want to go do but that starts over here that change that that means we have to change how we think over here if we really want to engage the poor in a healthy way.

44:40.18

lovelightstories

Yes.

44:49.90

lovelightstories

That is a really powerful conviction and a realization and perspective that I think is hard to notice until it's explained to you in that way. I think we're all in the west kind of just indoctrinated into this thinking. Because that's how it's been done by so many organizations for so long and that's what I love about what you're doing and others like Bob Lupton um Um, and the almer center is another one that that really ascribes to this type of model in that helping us understand that the worldview does begin with us. And um, it's all about our perspective.

45:28.78

Kurt Kandler

You know and you wonder why? the question is kind of like well why do we think like we do. Why do we think that a savior mentality is appropriate well variety of reasons but 1 of the other things that we've come to learn is is that and it's now and it's a principle again is is that you know we have to separate. And our side of the bridge. We have to separate what we give and how we give it from our need to feel good about ourselves. So at the end of the day and that's boy people get really rubbed the wrong way when I say that but at the end of the day. It's a lack of humility that could we possibly think that.

45:58.95

lovelightstories

A.

46:03.79

Kurt Kandler

Well, it's our idea and our money and therefore it should be our way could we possibly believe that they actually might have a better solution to their problems than we do and if we don't believe that that's a lack of humility and so if it feels pretty good to go over and.

46:14.93

lovelightstories

Yes.

46:20.59

Kurt Kandler

Build a school building in Uganda and do a little water project I couldve left there dusted off my hands and thought wow I helped but I was convicted pretty clearly that I was not helping I made every mistake I think in the book. Oh my gosh I'm mortified by some of the things we did but god redeems it and um and we have to rethink.

46:26.77

lovelightstories

Right? um.

46:39.40

Kurt Kandler

How to engage the poor if we're actually going to go help them and that's what that's I Hopefully that's what this book does.

46:44.80

lovelightstories

Right? right? and I think another thing too is that we um, don't understand the poor because we're not in proximity to the poor or I'm saying the poor but people living in poverty right? material

poverty and I think that's. Part of it and so again, what your model is doing is you're coming to understand them and their needs listening to them rather than ascribing um and and being in proximity and I think that's that's a huge distinction here too because we can't possibly create solutions for things that we don't fully understand. And they understand it Best themselves.

47:17.30

Kurt Kandler

And we we want to help the poor without really knowing the poor same on us because they're amazing I mean I call I label them the poor but I mean people struggling with extreme poverty have so much to teach us. Ah, and if we do that through relationship and.

47:19.10

lovelightstories

Um, yes, yes, yes, yes, that's so true.

47:34.48

Kurt Kandler

Earning the right to be heard and getting to know them and getting understand their perspective and their solutions as opposed to thinking that we have the answers to everything you know I end this book with asking our staff in countries in all the countries where we work if you were sitting in a room full of. Well-intentioned capable resourced donors in the west and you could say anything to to them. How would you finish these 2 sentences if you really want to help which of course the title of the book if you really want to help start doing these things and if you really want to help stop doing these things and I just sent them those questions and said. Tell me what you think how would you answer that and man their answers came back and I thought this is a great way to end this book because it's really convicting if you really want to help leave when the project is done when you're finished leave don't so overstay your welcome if you really want to help stop coming here with thinking that you have the solutions to our problems.

48:15.80

lovelightstories

Yes.

48:29.77

Kurt Kandler

Really want to help start pouring into leaders I mean they lay it out all out and it's like Wow these are the people on the ground on the front lines. They understand the problems they understand the solutions and this would be their answer to us Now we are very generous people and we are very helpful people and we are well well intentioned.

48:40.63

lovelightstories

Yes.

48:48.86

Kurt Kandler

But good intentions are not good enough in my view. We've got to. We've got to come up with a new paradigm of how to engage the poor to effectively help them and that's what we try to do around here.

48:58.33

lovelightstories

Yeah I Want to highlight one last example of that actually like good intentions are not good enough. Um, it's It's a really funny story I was laughing out loud when I read it. It was the story of the cows and the Latrines.

50:03.39

Kurt Kandler

Yeah, so we we would go over there. You can imagine you know you over there and people are living in small little huts with thatched roofs and cowdung walls Mudden sticks and. You know every time it rains the walls crumble like that school building did and in in Uganda and you know people come over and they say well these people need houses. We need to build them houses so they would go and build them houses without asking if they want houses. They would just build them and and film pretty good about ourselves because we went and just built all these houses and they come back a couple years later and people were not living in the houses they didn't want the houses but seemed like a pretty safe place to keep their cows which was their wealth which was everything to them and so to protect their livestock. They would go put. These cows in these homes and of course the people the americans or the westerners whoever was come back and are aghast by that they're appalled by that. How could we come over here and build you houses and you put your animals in these houses. Well, you never ask them. You never listened to them you you had the answer to their problem.

51:03.32

lovelightstories

Meaning.

51:09.79

Kurt Kandler

And um, yeah I mean it's It's kind of funny I mean it's It's not really funny because it's an enormous waste of resources. Um, but yeah, we don't ask we tell and we should and we should do more asking.

51:11.55

lovelightstories

Um, yeah, yeah, right? exactly exactly and and I think the Latrines they just weren't using the lowtrines because they had a ah different solution and so they didn't need them so in in both instances.

51:25.27

Kurt Kandler

Um, no.

51:31.27

lovelightstories

Um, they just created something that they they didn't really need.

51:33.70

Kurt Kandler

I get so I get frustrated with that I go over there and I know there's technology. There's solutions. There's compost latrines there's whatever thing would make the community healthier but culture matters Stephanie culture matters and you're not going to go over there with a western culture and change their. Hundreds year-old culture of how they do their business how they live how

they you just can't come in and swoop in and and and put a western solution in place and expect them to adopt it. Um, you have to walk with them and and again earn the right to be heard and.

52:01.21

lovelightstories

Right.

52:07.94

Kurt Kandler

Listen to them and let them lead and let them fail and get some things right? Get some things wrong and you do that through relationship. That's how that's why our relationships with our communities are multi-year relationships a decade long. We're graduating a community this year we've been walking with this community for 13 years it's a long time.

52:18.58

lovelightstories

Yes.

52:27.46

Kurt Kandler

So long time.

52:28.42

lovelightstories

Yeah, I'm glad you mentioned that a community is graduating because that's ultimately where I wanted to end because um, this model is working and it's it's like you said you go um a inch deep in a mile or a mile deep and an inch wide right.

52:41.40

Kurt Kandler

Yeah, right, exactly nothing inside.

52:45.58

lovelightstories

Yes, yes, and and but over these time periods like you're you're trying to work yourself out of this job like you don't want to have to continue walking with the community. The goal is to create that capacity where they are then sustainable on their own and that is actually happening. Yes.

53:01.85

Kurt Kandler

Yep, it sure is it's amazing. Doesn't happen everywhere. It doesn't happen every time I don't want to I don't make it sound like it does but we'll graduate our thirteenth community this year graduation is basically again, it goes back to when I talked about outcomes establishing the outcomes.

53:03.87

lovelightstories

Yes.

53:19.30

Kurt Kandler

Before you even really get started what where are we trying to what's your vision for your community. Where do you want to go? How do you know that you're going to get there if you don't know where you're going. How do you know? you're to get there ever get there right? So we have those outcomes and as we start approaching accomplishing 80 % ish of those outcomes. We can start thinking about graduating and ah graduating a community and graduation simply is. It's reached a place a community has gotten to a place that it has to find as a um as the outcomes that it hoped for 10128 however, many years prior and um. And there's a big celebration. All the partners come in the community comes out lots of speeches. Lots of celebration and what are they celebrating? Um, you know they don't want us to leave. Ah we have relationship for a number of years. We're friends. We're family but um.

54:12.24

Kurt Kandler

You know it's like your kids at home sooner later they got to leave the nest. Um, and so what we are what we are celebrating is how much the community has done on its own. We're celebrating what God has done in their community and what they've done on their own look look how far you've come.

54:13.48

lovelightstories

Yeah.

54:28.90

Kurt Kandler

We don't ever talk about all the things we did again. We don't measure our success by what we do, We measure our success but what they do on their own and it's a huge celebration. It's really cool and um, you know you know it's what we strive for. We are trying to work ourselves out of a job as quickly as we can so we can go help another community somewhere else.

54:43.14

lovelightstories

Yes.

54:47.19

Kurt Kandler

But once we work ourselves out of a job. They'll continue that journey of development long after we leave and that's the key to solving solving that property problem.

54:57.79

lovelightstories

Wonderful. It's absolutely beautiful. Just an ah incredible picture. Okay, so before we wrap up Kurt I want to ask where we can find your book how we can follow four 10 support for 10 anything that you want to say there.

55:11.11

Kurt Kandler

Yeah, well I mean appreciate I appreciate the the time here and to help me talk um help you know work through all the things in a book I think there's a lot in there that we didn't talk about but you can get the book on Amazon it's called if you really want to help redefining the war on poverty. Um. Can search on my name Kurt Candleler K U R T you can go to fourtenbridge.org to learn more about what four 10 bridge is doing you know one of the best ways to get engaged in

what we do is to walk alongside the life of a child in one of our communities. So if you want to sponsor a child and. Walk with that child as they go through their journey to development. That's really a cool thing to to engage with and correspond with that child as they as they work their way through school. We'd appreciate that help. Um, and yeah, so that's that's how you ah you can how you can. There's a small group study that's going to be coming out in the in the coming months.

56:05.89

Kurt Kandler

Um, on extreme poverty and how to engage and how to really help I think it'll be a challenging study. It's gonna be different so look for that. But more on that later Maybe I'll get back on your podcast when we when that.

56:12.93

lovelightstories

Yeah, that's exciting I didn't know that I am going to be all into that that is so exciting.

56:18.60

Kurt Kandler

I probably shouldn't mentioned it because I'm in I I'm in the end of stages of writing it and it's and it's like oof. It's a lot. So let's give it a few months yet but yeah it's coming. It's that's way that's.

56:26.39

lovelightstories

Yeah, so it'll still be coming. It'll be coming in the future. Awesome! wonderful! Well Kurt this has just been so fun to reconnect and be able to discuss this and share it with everybody I think um. It's just a gift that you've given us this opportunity to start thinking about our own worldview and our shift in how we view people living in material poverty. So thank you so much.

56:49.81

Kurt Kandler

Well, it's my it was my pleasure. Thank you Stephanie.