

# Developing a missions strategy for your church.

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There is an age old saying that says, "When you aim at nothing you will hit it every time." This would define many of our mission outreaches. We give money to all the wrong people and for all of the wrong reasons. Many of them may be great missionaries with great plans but they weren't taken on for the right reason. Each church needs to develop THEIR OWN strategy and philosophy for missions. The great Commission was given to the local church, that means your church. This also should imply to us that the responsibility lies in the church and not in the individual missionary to do all that they can to reach the world with the gospel.

- The word, "strategy" is a military term referring to a plan of attack. It implies that a group of people seriously want to accomplish something; and because of this, they construct a well-researched and thought-out plan concerning how to achieve their desired objective. Churches that take their missions mandate seriously do missions on purpose (missions is their purpose - Acts 1:8). These churches have pastors who understand that Jesus commanded the church to look on the field for a reason (John 4:34 -35).
- A missions strategy is usually three-dimensional: it has a biblical dimension which provides the church's basis and direction; a personal dimension which incorporates the uniqueness of that particular church and recognizes its God-given opportunities (things such as strengths, resources, contexts, the church's own experience in missions, and its passions); and a practical dimension which seeks to meet obvious world needs as well as finishing the task of reaching the world.
- The strategy validates why we do what we do. It ensures that our decisions are based on our missions convictions. It allows us to make decisions more readily and consistently when we measure each decision to our stated strategy (an opportunity is easily shown to contribute or not contribute to our strategy). And finally, the strategy allows us to say yes to some and no to others (mission opportunities) based on purpose and conviction rather than bias or "beauty."
- Missions has to be the program of the church, we do not have a ladies

ministry a children's ministry and a missions ministry. Our church exists to reach the world with the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is not a spoke on the wheel, it is the hub and center of the church, everything else ought to feed off of our desire to reach the world with the gospel.

- Our missionary outreach should be balanced and simultaneous in its local, regional, national, and international involvement (Acts 1:8). We believe that no part of God's harvest field is more important than any other. The mission field is not defined by geographical borders. While no one local assembly can be everywhere at the same time, we have the responsibility to be simultaneously involved in as many areas as God gives us opportunity. Our desire is to have the greatest impact possible on the local, regional, national, and international levels.
- In America, we have some serious problems with being balanced. The Bible says that we are to do both. There are churches who will not support a missionary to the states and then there are others that will barely support foreign missionaries any more because of the importance of the home land. Be careful to be balanced in the kind of missionaries that you are supporting. Another thing where we are not balanced is in the supporting of nationals or of North Americans. We have to be balanced, there is a place to support nationals as well as North Americans and may I say that there are as many national flops out there as American ones. It all comes down to the same thing, we must support the right kind of men that fit into the missions philosophy and strategy of our local church.

Our missionary outreach should result in fruit of a permanent nature and of eternal consequence (John 15:16). We believe that success in missionary endeavor is measured in permanent results, rather than mere activity alone. The supreme objective of the Great Commission is to make disciples (Matthew 28:19). Our efforts are ultimately directed toward those activities that in some concrete way contribute to the establishment of local assemblies of believers that will remain as a testimony to future generations.

Our missionary outreach should be faithful to the instruction of scripture (2 Timothy 3:15-17). We are committed to the infallibility and inerrancy of the divinely inspired word of God. Jesus Christ, Himself, is the content of the missionary message (Acts 1:8). True missions is concerned with bearing witness to His person, not the many wonderful things that can result as the fruit of missions or as a tool for missions. Medical and social work, social reform, relief and development are only means to an end.

Our missionary outreach should be a clear demonstration of divine power (Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8; John 20:21). We believe that our source of authority and power is the very person of Jesus Christ. However much activity we accomplish and at whatever place, and by whatever motives, unless the power be of God, that effort is ultimately of no lasting consequence. Missionary outreach, therefore, should be rooted and grounded in the spiritual life of the church and the individuals that comprise it, and in their corporate and individual prayer as God displays His faithfulness to His promises. While we have the responsibility to utilize our God-given talents and intelligence in the development of missions strategy, we confess that all decisions and strategy are totally subject to the leadership of God's Spirit (1 Corinthians 12; Romans 12; Acts 13:1-4; Acts 16:8-10).

Our missionary outreach should be as effective as possible in the utilization of human and material resources (1 Corinthians 4:12; 1 Peter 4:10). It is required that we be faithful as stewards of the resources God has entrusted to us. Under the leadership of God's Spirit, we will attempt to use our resources in such a way as to create a multiplying effect in their employment.

Our missionary outreach should be an example and an encouragement to other churches (2 Corinthians 8:1-8; 1 Timothy 4:12; Philippians 3:17; 2 Thessalonians 3:9; 1 Thessalonians 1:6-8). We believe that the correct fulfillment of the Great Commission results in a multiplying effect. Our desire is to encourage other assemblies of believers to join with us in asking God to burden our hearts for the harvest, to pray for laborers, and to be obedient to His mission.

Our missionary outreach should strive for the total involvement of the congregation (1 Corinthians 12; Romans 12; 1 Peter 2:9; Acts 13:1-4). While only a small percentage of our fellowship will ever be specifically sent out as cross-cultural missionaries, every member can participate directly in prayer, giving, special projects, short-term missions, encouragement, and other areas of personal involvement.

**The missions objectives of your church can be realized with a threefold strategy.**

1. Reaching Key Cities:

This is an effective means of multiplying our efforts and resources. When bases are established in key cities, the gospel naturally begins

to flow outward to the surrounding regions that are economically, socially, politically, or in other ways dependent upon them (Acts 13:49; 19:10). This is an approach that was effectively used in the Book of Acts.

Establishing local churches is the best way to provide for permanent results, effective use of resources, accountability, and the making and training of disciples.

Reaching key cities is a strategy that is applicable to regional, national, and international outreach. Reaching the middle classes of urban areas is an effective means of reaching the cities. They are often most receptive to leadership training, more responsible, and have the necessary resources to assume eventual leadership responsibility for local, regional, and national outreach. They often have greater mobility, both up and down, in the social spectrum.

## 2. Sending and Supporting Key Men:

They are chosen and qualified through discipleship and leadership training.

Key men worthy of being sent and supported will not necessarily have similar ministries, but rather conform to one of several biblical models: Paul — pioneer, leader, multi-gifted, church planter, visionary; Barnabas — pioneer, leader, able to be second member of team, exhorter, encourager; Timothy — apprentice, pastor/ teacher; John Mark — support personnel, servant; and Luke — specialized ministry, team player.

Key men can be supported in various ways: prayer, financial support on a monthly basis, special onetime offerings, training, help on special projects, and providing needed resources directly or through networking.

The missionary is accountable to the lord of the harvest and expresses that accountability through his relationship to the local church which has commissioned and sent him. The local church does not control the missionary. The missionary does not work as an independent agent. The relationship between the sending church and the missionary is based upon mutual trust, respect, and commitment to the lord of the harvest.

- The idea of key men will totally change the way that we go about supporting missionaries, the guy that is the most persistent is not the guy that gets before our church to tell them of his burden, the man who gets before our church to share with them is a key man with potential of impacting his part of the world with the gospel. This will mean that you as a pastor will start looking for certain missionaries instead of them looking for you because you know that they would be great in helping your church fulfill its part in reaching the world.
- Some things that ought to be considered about the men that you are supporting are things like: What did this man do while he was in the states? In Peru, we have sent missionaries out around the world. Before they are sent out, they must have won, baptized and discipled into a thriving relationship with Christ at least 20 believers. This ensures that when they go to the field that they can and will be able to reach and train others to serve Christ. Most missionaries have never even taught a Sunday School class in the states yet we are going to invest thousands into their potential to reach a country with the gospel. If you have to send him a lot of questionnaires then he is probably not the kind of guy you want on the field. We must start supporting men of purpose on purpose that have proved themselves where they are. Any missionary that goes out unprepared came out of a local church. If he doesn't know how to preach or do the work where do you think he learned what he does know? If he is well prepared or under prepared then think who is responsible? Is the Bible College responsible for his preparation or is the church under the leadership of the pastor?
- There are some things that we can ask to know if they are key men and the kind of men that we want to support. Things like how much research have they done on their country. Before a missionary comes to the church check out the general statistics of the country and ask him about them while he is there. He ought not know all the general questions. If he hasn't studied his country enough then he probably isn't the kind of missionary that you want. What is his work ethic? Missions is over spiritualized many times. Just because a person has been called by God to a place does not mean that he ought not be working. The answer I have not had to call any pastors and I think that is what God wants me to do is very spiritual but very rarely works. On the mission field, a lot of times, the work is established through Gods leading and much hard work. If they do not work hard here then how are they going to work hard there? God honors hard work. Missionaries do not need to be taken on by pity or by need. Many time the pastor and people in the church feel pity for a person

and when they do this, this causes the church to want to help. Help by giving a one time offering maybe, but a missionary should not be taken on by need they ought to be taken on by their fruit or by their potential of fruit. Look for a man who will produce or has produced in what God has called him to do. We are sending way too many missionaries out to the field who are not prepared to do the job and cannot fulfill their own expectations for when they arrive. We ought to take on the missionaries like we would invest in a business. If you had a stock in the stock market then you would watch it to see how it was doing. In missions we ought to keep our eyes open as to what is going on. That doesn't mean large numbers in attendance but he should be able to produce 2 or 3 disciples in a term.

- One clear sign of whether or not a missionary is the kind of man you would want to support is by asking him if his goals extend past the country that God has called him to minister in. Most get bogged down with the work and they forget that the Great Commission goes a lot further than the country where they are working. The Great Commission has to do with reaching the whole world. What is his world view or is he very localized in his view of missions? Many times, our missionaries are nothing more than pastors in another field. They get paid from America but are working over there. Ask him if he understands the importance of training others instead of him doing all of the work himself. If he states that there are no good people in his country this is not the kind of man you want to be supporting.

### 3. Providing Key Tools:

America's abundance of resources and materials should be made available to believers around the world (2 Corinthians 8:13-15). We should give of what God has given to us so that we can see the world reached with the gospel of Jesus Christ. After all this is HIS COMMISSION for HIS CHURCH that we have the privilege of working in.

- How to get the people to give more and believe more in missions.
- One of our greatest problems with missions, is that missionaries are seen as bills. I do not know of anyone who gets excited when it is time to open up a bill. Missions ought to be more than a bill, we ought to be investing our time and our money and our love in the men that God has given us to support and we ought to be informing our people of the fruit that is coming forth with the investments we have made. When little effort is expended, little results should be expected.

- Often the yearly Missions Conference is the least attended conference of the year. Lets go over a few reasons for this and how to work on making it better. Many of the problems that we have in missions is caused by the kind of missionaries that we allow in our churches. Our people don't come to the conferences but it might be because they are tired of what they see in missionaries. Pick the right ones to be before your people and your people will get excited about missions, support the right ones and you will have a church that thinks that it is impacting the world. Support missionaries who you would be happy to have on your staff position at your church. When you say we are going to have a missionary speak, most of your people cringe, this shows that you are not having the right kind of missionaries in your church. You should look for the absolute best missionaries you can get and when you do it will change the churches outlook on missions.
- Do not hid behind a questionnaire because you don't want to have missionaries in, have a plan and make sure that the missionaries fit into that plan. Missions is not a necessary evil in our church, it isn't that we allow one missionary a month to come to the church, it should be that our people love missions and missionaries because the kind of people that they see as missionaries is exciting. Having the right kind of missionaries in will change your missions program and also your sending power. If church seemed as dull as most missionaries seem then our people wouldn't want to go to church either. You are not doing your church or missions any service when you allow just about anyone to present their ministry in your church. This is the responsibility of the pastor and staff of the church.

One of the ways to get the people to give more to missions is to teach them to be debt free. The interest we pay to credit cards each month would revolutionize our missions giving. Teach your people to free themselves up to be able to give more to missions.

- Teach the people to reorder their priorities. Americas problems of today are not economical, they are priorities. A new \$60 video game came out last week and had 10,000,000 people waiting in line for it. America just spent \$600,000,000 on a video game, we spend tons on gourmet coffee and vehicles. Teach your people to rearrange their priorities. Make God and his mission first.

One of the best ways to make this happen is have your people visit the mission field. Have them see first hand the fields that are white unto harvest. This will change their giving and their entire lifestyle, make sure and send them to an exciting field where they will learn and be

challenged about their call to be a part in reaching the world with the gospel.

- Have a great Missions Conference, strive to make it the most exciting part of the year. It will change your peoples outlook on it if you invest heavily in your conference with your time and with your finances.