



Missions

Philosophy & Policy

FAITH COMMUNITY CHURCH



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1. Introduction

Missions is not just another program of the church—it is one of its most sacred, God-given responsibilities. The church exists to exalt God, edify believers, and evangelize the lost. Missions provides the opportunity to expand evangelism beyond the circle of the personal relationships of the church into the state, nation, and entire globe. As such, missions policy deserves careful attention.

Yet far too often, the church approaches missions with sentimentality rather than strategy, leading to efforts that may be sincere but miss the mark. Throughout history, a range of missions models have emerged—some firmly rooted in Scripture, others driven more by human compassion than by the Great Commission. As a result, many believers remain unclear about why missions exist. This lack of clarity weakens our resolve and misdirects our resources. The church cannot afford to drift in ambiguity. If we are to honor Christ and steward our efforts wisely, we must embrace a clear, unified, and biblically grounded philosophy of missions. Such clarity cuts through competing visions and calls us back to the core purpose: making disciples of all nations. When the church unites around this vision, we move forward not only with conviction, but with integrity, with purpose, and with power. Anything less is unworthy of the One who sends us.



2. The Need for Sound Theology

As churches enter missionary partnerships across borders and cultures, it's not enough to simply send money, share resources, or deploy willing individuals. At the core of these efforts is a message of salvation, which itself must be both promoted and preserved as it crosses cultural and linguistic boundaries. Without sound theology, missionary efforts risk drifting off course, falling into confusion, or even doing spiritual harm. We must be clear: theology is not a luxury or a secondary concern in missions. It is the foundation. And when that foundation is shaky, the entire structure of missions begins to collapse.

Theology Shapes Missionary Goals

The mission of the church is too important to be steered by sentiment, pragmatism, or compromise. It must be governed by truth—by sound, biblical theology. Without theological clarity, missions becomes a mirror of secular humanitarianism—focused on foreign aid, economic development, healthcare, sanitation or education. These are worthy goals in their place, but entirely insufficient to meet the deepest needs of the soul. Missions is not about generic good deeds or vague calls to “make the world a better place.” It fulfills a clear mandate to “make disciples of all nations” (Matt. 28:19–20) by teaching all that Jesus commanded. Without this mandate as the goal and focus of all efforts, clarity on the mission will be lost and the gospel will be compromised in an effort to achieve external metrics and materialistic success.

Therefore, the mission and the missionary must always be concerned with promoting and protecting the clear articulation of the teachings of the Scripture. Others may shift toward cultural engagement or interfaith dialogue, slowly diluting the exclusivity of Christ in favor of a more “tolerant” gospel. But these are not the goals Christ gave us. If we lose the theological foundation, we lose our way. Theological clarity keeps our eyes fixed on the true goal: the glory of God through the salvation of sinners and establishment of local churches.

Theology Protects the Integrity of the Gospel

As the Apostle Paul planted churches and sowed the seeds of the gospel, he understood the danger of distortion, especially in contexts of spiritual openness



and diversity. He sternly warned the Galatians of the dangers of ever entertaining “another gospel” (Gal. 1:6–9). Missionary work—by its very nature—brings the gospel into contact with a multitude of worldviews, traditions, and ideologies. Without a shared theological foundation, partnerships can quickly turn into compromises, even catastrophe.

Churches must be confident that those they support proclaim a gospel that is biblically faithful, doctrinally clear, and spiritually powerful. This means alignment on core doctrines: the authority, clarity and sufficiency of Scripture, the deity and sufficiency of Christ, the necessity of grace through faith, the reality of sin and judgment, and the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit and a life of repentance that reflects true conversion. Without this alignment, we risk exporting confusion, not clarity; error, not truth. The world doesn’t need another social message dressed in Christian language. It needs the unchanging gospel, guarded and delivered by those who know its worth.

Theology Ensures Accountability and Integrity

Sound theology also provides the standard for accountability. Missionary partnerships function best when there is mutual trust—but trust must rest on truth. Without theological clarity, it becomes difficult to evaluate the faithfulness and effectiveness of missionary work. Divergent theological convictions often lead to conflicting approaches to ethics, evangelism, and strategies for church planting.

Theology equips both the sending church and the missionary to assess progress, correct errors, encourage faithfulness, and evaluate partnerships. It creates clarity in expectations, fosters transparency in communication, minimizes conflict and upholds integrity in practice. In short, it helps ensure that both parties are walking in the same direction, according to the same truth.

Theology Avoids Cultural Syncretism

Missionaries face the daily challenge of ministering in cultures steeped in worldviews hostile to the gospel. From animism in Africa to materialism in the West, from ancestor worship in Asia to tribal mysticism in South America, every



culture has its own set of lies masquerading as truth. Without sound theology, missionaries can—and often do—compromise, whether by softening the message or accommodating false beliefs in the name of cultural sensitivity.

Syncretism—the blending of Christian truth with local religions or customs—is a constant threat. It produces a version of Christianity that lacks saving power and leads people to trust in half-truths. Sound theology gives missionaries the tools to recognize and reject these compromises. It empowers them to minister with compassion without conceding truth. It is the shield that protects the gospel from being reshaped in the image of the culture.

Theology Establishes Unity in the Body of Christ

Theological clarity also fosters real unity in the global church just as it does in the local church (Ephesians 4:13). In John 17:21, Jesus prayed that His people would be one—so that the world would believe the Father had sent Him. But unity isn't forged through vague sentimentality or theological vagueness. It is built on shared conviction in God's revealed truth. When churches and missionaries align theologically, they function as one body, bearing one witness, preaching one gospel.

This unity becomes especially critical in a world where Christianity is marginalized or misunderstood. The fragmented witness of doctrinally divergent ministries only adds to the confusion. But when churches and missionaries stand together in truth, they become a powerful testimony to the reconciling grace of God—a light that cannot be ignored.

The Consequences of Neglecting Theology

History offers painful lessons about the cost of ignoring theology. In past centuries, Western missionaries often entangled the gospel with colonialism, promoting Western culture rather than biblical Christianity. This left many nations skeptical of Christian missions, associating it with oppression instead of liberation. In more recent years, the rise of pragmatic and results-driven models has led some ministries to measure success by numbers rather than faithfulness—gathering crowds without making true disciples.



These failures are not random. They are the natural result of theological neglect. When churches value results over doctrine, emotions over Scripture, or relevance over reverence, they set themselves on a path of long-term failure. A theologically hollow missions program may appear fruitful in the short term, but it will ultimately collapse under the weight of its own compromise.

Training and Selecting Effective Missionaries

If theology is essential, then churches must make theological training a priority—for themselves and for their missionaries. Missionaries must be thoroughly grounded in biblical doctrine, capable of articulating the gospel clearly and defending it faithfully in diverse settings.

Churches must also establish clear theological criteria for selecting missionary partners. This includes carefully vetting their doctrine, examining their methods, and asking hard questions about their approach to ministry.

Conclusion

Theology is not a barrier to missions; it is the foundation. It dictates our goals, protects our message, ensures accountability, prevents compromise, fosters unity, and sharpens our efforts.

Churches must reclaim this urgency. The church is the pillar and foundation of the truth (1 Tim. 3:15). And our mission work must reflect that identity. We must require theological fidelity from those we send and those we support. We must train, teach, examine, and pray. The integrity of our witness—and the eternal souls of those we seek to reach—depend on it.



3. The Need for Clear Philosophy

Clarity in doctrine must be matched by clarity in ministry philosophy. The church's missionary efforts, no matter how well-intentioned, will falter without a well-defined, biblically rooted philosophy guiding them. A foggy or inconsistent approach breeds inefficiency, confusion, and even theological disaster. But when mission efforts are built on the firm foundation of God's Word—when they focus on planting healthy churches, training strong leaders, and proclaiming the gospel without compromise—they align with the very heartbeat of the Great Commission. This is not just a matter of strategic effectiveness; it is a matter of faithfulness to Christ.

When churches partner with organizations or individuals who lack philosophical alignment, resources are wasted and expectations are confused. Missions become a smorgasbord of competing agendas. Some want to build schools, others dig wells, and others hand out Bibles. All good things, perhaps—but without a shared, gospel-driven philosophy, they quickly pull in different directions.

Churches and missionaries must resist the pull of pragmatic activism and instead commit themselves to a philosophy that is both theologically sound and strategically wise. At the center of that philosophy must be three non-negotiable priorities: the establishment of healthy local churches, the development of indigenous leadership, and an unrelenting focus on the gospel.

Developing a Clear Philosophy

Developing a clear missions philosophy doesn't happen by accident. It begins with opening the Bible and allowing Scripture—not pragmatism, tradition, or personal preference—to shape our convictions. The New Testament gives us not only the content of our message, but also the shape of our methods.

Churches must engage in honest self-assessment. Missions efforts be aligned with biblical priorities and principles. We cannot be content simply sponsoring programs that “feel” meaningful but lack theological depth and strategic clarity.



Where needed, churches must make courageous changes. This may involve ending long-standing partnerships, redirecting funds, or training missionaries to think and work differently. But if we truly care about faithfulness to Christ and fruitfulness in the harvest, these changes are not sacrifices—they are obedience.

And missions must be evaluated—constantly. There is no room for autopilot. Churches must build accountability into their missionary relationships. They should expect regular reports, conduct theological assessments, and solicit feedback from local believers. What fruit is being produced? Are churches being built up, established and planted? Are leaders being equipped? Is the gospel being proclaimed clearly? These questions are not intrusive; they are necessary.

The Gospel at the Center

If the church is the vehicle of missions and leadership is the steering wheel, then the gospel is the engine. Strip it away, and everything else is a shell. The gospel—Christ crucified, risen, and reigning—is not a preliminary message to be replaced with humanitarian work. It is the core, the lifeblood, and the non-negotiable center of everything we do.

Paul called the gospel “of first importance” (1 Cor. 15:3–4), and he lived accordingly. Any missionary philosophy that treats the gospel as one priority among many has already betrayed its calling. We must not let metrics, cultural trends, or social causes distract us from our first duty: to preach Christ and call sinners to repentance and faith.

This doesn’t mean we ignore human suffering. Acts of mercy and justice are part of our witness. But they must flow from and point back to a gospel-focused church body, where true discipleship occurs. When compassion replaces proclamation, missions become indistinguishable from secular aid work. Temporary relief without eternal truth is a cruel bait-and-switch. It soothes the body while leaving the soul unhealed. In a world eager to dilute truth, we must insist on gospel fidelity.



The Biblical Mandate for Healthy Churches

The Great Commission in Matthew 28:19–20 commands us not merely to make converts, but to make disciples—disciples who are taught to obey everything Christ has commanded. That kind of formation can only take place within the structure of a local church. Evangelism without the church is a spiritual orphanage. Discipleship without the church is disobedience in disguise.

Paul’s missionary example underscores this. He didn’t breeze through cities with a message and a meal. He planted churches, appointed elders, corrected doctrinal drift, and ensured those fledgling congregations had what they needed to grow strong and stand firm. This was his methodology because he understood that healthy churches are God’s instrument for preserving the gospel, nurturing believers, and multiplying ministry.

Where churches are healthy, the gospel is proclaimed, sin is confronted, believers are matured, and new missionaries are sent out. Where churches are weak or neglected, false doctrine festers, believers flounder, and the mission stalls. Any missional approach that bypasses the church or treats it as optional is already off course.

The Role of Strong Leadership

No church will rise above the character and convictions of its leaders. This is why Scripture places so much emphasis on qualified, godly men who are able to teach sound doctrine and shepherd God’s people faithfully (1 Tim. 3:1–7; Titus 1:5–9). It is vital to recognize that these are not cultural suggestions; they are divine mandates. Without strong leadership, churches become vulnerable: to false teaching, to internal division, and to slow spiritual death.

In the context of missions, this truth takes on an added layer of urgency.

Missionaries cannot and should not function as permanent pastors of local congregations. The goal must be to raise up indigenous leaders who know the language, understand the culture, can shepherd the people long after the missionary has gone, and can reproduce themselves. A commitment to raising up qualified and trained national leadership is critical to long-term sustainability of the ministry.



This requires more than enthusiasm. It requires theological training, intentional discipleship, and a long-term investment in people. There are no shortcuts to leadership development. Churches that skip this step create dependency; they build fragile ministries that collapse when foreign support is withdrawn. But churches led by biblically trained, Spirit-empowered locals are not only sustainable—they are powerful forces for gospel witness in their communities.

The Sovereignty of God

The sovereignty of God is not a theological accessory to missions—it is the foundation. Without it, missions become a frantic scramble to rescue souls as though the outcome depended solely on our efforts. But Scripture paints a different picture: God is the One who saves. He appoints the ends and the means. He is not wringing His hands in heaven, hoping we will succeed. He is reigning—sending, guiding, and accomplishing His redemptive plan through His people. This truth doesn't make missions unnecessary; it makes them unstoppable.

To deny God's sovereignty is to make missions a burden of human ingenuity, measured by marketing strategies and emotional appeals. But when we embrace His rule, our confidence grows. We speak boldly because we know God opens hearts. We labor tirelessly because we know our efforts are not in vain. Sovereignty fuels urgency, not passivity. Paul boldly proclaimed the Gospel to both Jews and Gentiles, ultimately understanding that “as many as were appointed to eternal life believed” (Acts 13:48)

Contrast this with the confusion of man-centered missions: driven by metrics, obsessed with speed, and plagued by burnout. Urgency without clarity produces chaos. It trades long-term fruit for short-term numbers. But God-honoring missions are grounded in truth, not trends. Every dollar given, every missionary sent, and every decision made must not only be anchored in a clear and biblical philosophy, but they must also flow from the conviction that God is sovereign over the harvest.

The Great Commission is not a vague suggestion—it is a royal command from the risen Christ. It deserves our best thinking, our clearest theology, and our deepest trust. Missions must be fueled by fire, yes—but directed by truth. That



truth is this: the God who calls us to go is the God who guarantees His Word will not return void. The urgency is real—but so is the sovereignty. And in that, we labor with confidence.

Conclusion

The greatest threat to missions is not hostility from the world, it's confusion within the church. Many churches and mission agencies launch initiatives without a defined philosophy, drifting from one trend to another without any theological anchor. The results are compromised partnerships, constant conflict among workers, wasted resources, doctrinal drift, and ineffective witnesses.

Undefined missions also invite cultural imperialism. When missionaries export their traditions instead of the gospel, they end up creating replicas of their home churches rather than cultivating indigenous expressions of faith. Christianity becomes confused with Western customs, and local believers are hindered from owning their faith. A clear philosophy keeps the gospel central and guards against these errors.

This is the kind of missions that endures. This is the kind of missions that honors Christ. And this is the kind of missions the world desperately needs. The stakes are too high for anything less. The time is now. Let us labor with wisdom, with conviction, and with a clear purpose—to make disciples of all nations, through churches that are strong, leaders who are faithful, and a gospel that is never compromised.



4. The Need for Strong Partnerships

In the work of missions, we are not building empires—we are advancing the Kingdom of Christ. That task is too weighty, too urgent, and too sacred to be entrusted to lone rangers, poorly aligned teams, or churches operating in silos. If we are going to fulfill the Great Commission faithfully and effectively, we must recover a biblical vision for strong, intentional, and enduring partnerships in missions. Missions is not the work of individuals acting in isolation. It is the work of the body of Christ—each part doing its job, each member upholding the others, all working together under the headship of Christ. This is not optional; it is essential.

The Role of the Missionary

The missionary is not a spiritual freelancer or an independent agent of goodwill. A missionary is a messenger—called by God, commissioned with the gospel, and sent by the church. His job is not to build his own platform, but to proclaim Christ and plant healthy churches. Yet in many cases today, missionaries are sent without accountability, without clear theological grounding, and without support structures that reflect the weight of their task. This is not just unwise, it is unbiblical. When the Apostle Paul embarked on his missionary career, it was under the guidance and with the blessing and support of his home church (Acts 13:3).

When missionaries operate apart from strong partnerships, they quickly become vulnerable: theologically, emotionally, and spiritually. They are exposed to isolation, discouraged by unmet expectations, and tempted to compromise in the face of local pressures. But when they are supported by churches that know them, love them, and walk with them, their faith is strengthened, their work is focused, and their endurance is multiplied. We need fewer “lone heroes” and more humble servants, tethered to the church and driven by truth.

The Role of Missionary Teams

The Apostle Paul’s ministry was marked not by solo ventures, but by consistent, intentional teamwork—rooted in theological unity, mutual accountability, and shared mission. The New Testament gives us numerous examples of Paul



working with others in close partnership (Acts 13:2–3; Acts 15:36–40; Acts 16:1–3; Acts 20:4; 2 Corinthians 1:9). Romans 16:1–16 reads like a roll call of Paul's co-laborers—Phoebe, Priscilla and Aquila, Andronicus and Junia, Urbanus, Timothy, Tertius, and more.

Missionary teams must be forged in unity of doctrine, philosophy, and purpose. A team of missionaries who disagree on core convictions—about the gospel, the church, or missions philosophy—may seem effective at first, but their partnership is a ticking time bomb. Eventually, their differences will surface, and division will follow.

Too often, mission teams collapse not because of external persecution, but because of internal disunity. Misalignment leads to mistrust. Mistrust leads to conflict. And conflict kills mission. What we need are teams built on theological clarity, relational integrity, and shared commitment to biblical priorities.

Paul's entire missionary life was saturated with team dynamics. Whether it was Barnabas, Silas, Timothy, Luke, Titus, Priscilla and Aquila, or others—Paul's ministry was not individualistic. He modeled a pattern of collaboration, mentorship, and shared responsibility. There remains a need for intentional, theological partnerships in missions today.

The Role of the Sending Church

The sending church is not a silent sponsor—it is the primary agent of mission. It bears the responsibility of affirming the call, training the worker, and providing ongoing oversight and care. When a church sends a missionary, it is not outsourcing responsibility to a mission board. It is owning that responsibility before God.

Far too many churches have reduced their role to fundraising and farewell services. They treat missionaries as extended family members, not commissioned ambassadors. But biblical sending means spiritual authority. It means real accountability. It means staying involved in their doctrine, practice, and decisions on the field. The sending church should not just ask, “How are you doing?” but, “Are you being faithful?” “Are you building according to the Word?” “Are you aligned with the mission we share?”



To that end, the sending church maintains primary responsibility for overall doctrinal faithfulness, alignment with missions philosophy, and financial integrity. In addition, the sending church will want to provide personal encouragement and counsel to the missionary.

This level of involvement may seem intense—but anything less is negligent. The spiritual health of the missionary, the purity of the gospel, and the integrity of the church being planted all depend on it. When the sending church abdicates its role, the mission becomes unanchored, vulnerable to drift, and prone to error. But when it stands firm, the missionary stands stronger.

The Role of Supporting Churches

The reality is that very few churches will be able to fully fund a missionary on their own. Other supporting churches are vital, and it is necessary for the missionary to discover additional partnering churches who would consider supporting the mission.

The role of the supporting church, however, is to strengthen the hands of the sending church, not to override or replace its authority. A supporting church must never function as a second sending church. It must honor the leadership, philosophy, and priorities of the sending church—and only support missionaries who align with that framework. If a church cannot affirm the direction and doctrine of the mission, it should reconsider its financial commitment to the partnership. To support a missionary without supporting the sending church is to undermine biblical order. This is a recipe for confusion and compromise.

Supporting churches are not a substitute for the sending church—but their role is vital and should be taken seriously. These churches are not passive donors; they are active partners in the work. That means missionaries must cultivate strong, intentional relationships with them. Regular updates, clear communication, and specific prayer requests are not optional—they're essential. The supporting church, in turn, must do more than send a check. They should pray fervently, speak words of encouragement, and when possible, provide short-term help on the field. This mutual investment builds trust, unity, and long-term fruitfulness. But this kind of partnership requires realism: a missionary should not take on more support churches than he can



meaningfully engage. It is better to have 8–10 deeply committed churches than 20 disengaged ones. Supporting churches should also recognize this and give generously enough that the missionary is not forced to chase dozens of shallow partnerships. Healthy missions flow from healthy relationships—and those relationships thrive on focus, communication, and mutual care.

When supporting churches operate rightly, they are a source of immense blessing. They encourage the missionary, contribute financially, and offer resources and prayer in a way that honors the sending church's leadership. They stand in the gap, not in the spotlight. That kind of support is priceless—and urgently needed.

The Role of the Local Church

The local church on the field is not a side effect of missions—it is body of Christ through which His power and life flow. But it must be a biblical church, not just a loose gathering of believers. It must be built on sound doctrine, led by qualified elders, rooted in the Word, and governed by Christ. This is not only one of the primary focuses of the missionary, but it is also one of his great blessings. The missionary cannot be disconnected from church life himself.

Along with other missionaries on the team, strong and healthy local churches provide the primary source of day-to-day accountability for the missionary. Even while providing leadership, the missionary must demonstrate humility and accountability to the local body of Christ in daily Christian character. By increasingly placing decisions and ministry responsibilities into the hands of qualified national leaders, the missionary is modeling humility, preparing a new generation, and strengthening his own accountability.

Local churches planted through missions must also be equipped to stand on their own. They are not permanent outposts of the West—they are indigenous bodies of Christ, meant to grow in maturity, leadership, and independence. That means missionaries must equip, not control; teach, not dominate; plant, and then step back. This takes humility, clarity, and intentionality. And it only happens when strong partnerships support the process at every stage.



Local Church vs. Sending Church Responsibility

One of the most misunderstood dynamics in missions today is the relationship between the sending church and the local church being planted. Who holds authority? Who provides direction? Where does the missionary's loyalty lie?

The biblical answer is clear: the sending church has spiritual authority over the missionary, even while the missionary is helping to establish and strengthen the local church. This authority does not usurp the autonomy of the new church, but it does protect the process of planting it. The missionary remains accountable to the church that sent him, even as he works to raise up leaders within the church he is planting.

Some argue that once a missionary is “on the field,” his loyalty shifts entirely to the local context. But this view severs the lifeline of accountability. It leaves missionaries functionally autonomous and often unguarded. Others claim that the local church should not be influenced at all by outside forces. But Paul himself instructed the churches he planted—and even revisited them to appoint elders and correct error. Apostolic authority did not end with planting; it extended to the maturing of those churches. The goal is a local church that operates under its own qualified and appointed leaders and by means of its own funding.

A biblical model of missions keeps the sending church involved and the local church growing. It allows for spiritual oversight without micromanagement. It fosters autonomy without abandonment. And it protects against both authoritarianism and anarchy.

The Role of the Sending Agency

A sending agency is not a substitute for the church—it is a support to the church. Its role is practical, not pastoral; logistical, not spiritual. Agencies can assist with cross-cultural training, field logistics, legal compliance, and crisis management. These functions are valuable, even vital. But they are not ultimate. The church alone carries the divine commission to make disciples and to send laborers into the harvest.



Problems arise when sending agencies act like spiritual authorities or when churches hand over that authority unthinkingly. No agency, no matter how experienced or reputable, can take the place of the local church in guarding doctrine, overseeing character, or defining mission strategy. When agencies begin to direct the vision, shape theological priorities, or insulate missionaries from church accountability, they have stepped beyond their biblical mandate.

For this reason, the choice of a sending agency matters deeply. Some agencies operate with a high view of the local church and actively partner with sending churches. Others see the church as peripheral—a donor base rather than a spiritual authority. Some prioritize sound doctrine and careful church planting. Others accommodate ecumenical partnerships, dilute the gospel, or promote unbiblical methods for the sake of growth and global reach.

As a church, we cannot endorse or support workers who are embedded in agencies that compromise theological integrity or hinder meaningful church oversight. We will give careful consideration to the philosophy, doctrinal stance, and accountability structures of any sending agency a missionary candidate seeks to partner with. If the agency undermines the church's God-given role, we must decline to participate.

Partnership in mission demands more than good intentions—it demands shared convictions, clarity of roles, and confidence that the missionary will remain tethered to the truth. The right agency can strengthen the mission. The wrong agency can sabotage it. We aim to support ministries where the church leads, the agency serves, and the gospel remains central.

Conclusion

Missions is not an individual endeavor. Missionaries, mission teams, sending churches, supporting churches, and local churches must be united—not by convenience or emotion—but by truth, conviction, and mutual commitment to the authority of Scripture and the priority of the church.

If we continue to pursue missions without strong partnerships, we will continue to see burnout, disunity, compromise, and confusion. But if we return to a model that values accountability over autonomy, clarity over pragmatism, and biblical fidelity over cultural relevance, we will see lasting fruit.



5. The Need for Qualified and Gifted Missionaries

Success in the global mission to spread the gospel hinges on the presence of qualified and gifted leaders. These men are shepherds of souls, interpreters of culture, and instruments of God's redeeming grace. Without such leaders, even the most well-resourced and well-meaning missionary efforts are destined to falter.

The damage caused by immature or ungifted leadership is not theoretical, it's tragically real. Mission works have collapsed, and entire communities have been turned off to the gospel because of poor leadership. A leader who lacks cultural awareness can offend or alienate those they're trying to reach. One who lacks integrity can bring shame on Christ's name. One who lacks theological grounding can introduce error or fail to confront it. Even a leader who is well-meaning but inept can derail a mission through poor stewardship and misguided priorities. The ripple effects of bad leadership extend beyond a single mission.

This is why the global church cannot afford to be casual or careless about who it sends and supports. Leadership matters. And where it is weak, everything suffers. For this reason, the identification, preparation, and ongoing support of spiritually mature and capable leaders must be a top priority for the global church.

Biblical Foundations for Qualified Leadership

From Genesis to Revelation, the Bible makes it clear that God uses leaders to accomplish His purposes. Moses, Joshua, David, and Nehemiah did not rise to prominence because of charisma alone, but because God called, equipped, and entrusted them with leadership. Their influence shaped nations and furthered redemptive history.

In the New Testament, this principle continues. Jesus Himself poured His earthly ministry into training twelve men. He did not simply scatter a message; He formed messengers. And after His resurrection, these men became pillars of the church and catalysts of its global expansion.



Paul reinforces this when he lays out clear qualifications for church leaders in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. These lists are not optional extras, they are foundational standards. A leader must be above reproach, grounded in truth, and skilled in teaching. These qualities do not fade in importance on the mission field—they intensify. Cross-cultural ministry introduces new challenges and risks, raising the bar for ministry training and expectations. The lack of qualified leaders opens the door to doctrinal drift, moral compromise, and strategic confusion, so churches must be more committed to carefully selecting and fully equipping these men and women before they are sent.

The Dual Importance of Qualification and Gifting

Leaders must have both godly character and spiritual gifting. These are not interchangeable. Qualification speaks to moral integrity, doctrinal soundness, and pastoral competence. Gifting refers to the God-given skills necessary to thrive in the complex world of missions: cross-cultural communication, problem-solving, vision casting, and disciple-making. One without the other is a liability. A qualified leader without gifting may stall a work through incompetence. A gifted leader without qualification may ruin it through pride or sin. We must not confuse sincerity with readiness. Missionary leaders must be tested, trained, and proven before they are entrusted with the weight of cross-cultural responsibility. Anything less dishonors the gospel and endangers souls.

The Role of Leaders in Missionary Partnerships

Ministry in a cross-cultural context is unique, and it requires specific skills. Leaders in missionary partnerships serve to clarify leadership vision, craft thoughtful strategies, and build trust among diverse partners. These roles are essential for ensuring the effectiveness and endurance of gospel work.

Clarifying Leadership Vision

A qualified missionary leader doesn't simply execute plans—they cast vision. They see what others don't. They discern God's direction and rally others to move toward it. Vision isn't ambition—it is clarity of direction informed and discerned by Biblical truth. In turn, Spirit-filled leaders call others to join him in following the Lord's will.



Without vision, missionary efforts wander. Goals become vague, efforts disjointed, and momentum dies. With out spirit filling, leaders cower under the fear of man or circumstances. But under visionary leadership, even small teams can achieve enormous impact. Vision draws people into partnership, fuels perseverance, and gives glory to God.

Crafting Thoughtful Strategies

Missionary work is never simple. It involves navigating a web of spiritual, cultural, and logistical challenges that demand more than good intentions—they require strategic minds and steady hands. Effective leaders must craft plans that honor both the spiritual mandate of gospel proclamation and the practical realities on the ground. They must be able to read the cultural landscape, discern real needs, and wisely unite the message of Christ with meaningful service. And when circumstances inevitably shift, they must have the discernment and courage to adjust course without compromising the mission. Poor strategy can squander time, waste money, and hurt people. But godly, thoughtful planning multiplies fruit.

Building Trust in the Midst of Diversity

Missionary leaders stand at the crossroads between sending churches, mission agencies, and local believers—serving as the key relational bridge that connects them all. Without relational competence, these connections fray.

Miscommunication breeds division. Suspicion replaces trust. On the other hand, a leader builds trust, preserves unity and communicates clearly when he is capable of engaging each party with humility, wisdom, and cultural sensitivity. When leaders handle these relationships well, missionary partnerships flourish. Such leaders are peacemakers who turn diversity into strength.

The Church's Responsibility to Raise Up Leaders

If we believe qualified leadership is essential, we must invest accordingly. This is not just the responsibility of a few mission organizations—it is the calling of the entire church. Leadership development must become a central focus of missionary engagement.



- 1) Identification** - Churches and mission agencies must take an active and intentional role in identifying those called to missionary leadership (Acts 13:1ff)—men and women who exhibit both the godly character and the specific gifting necessary for the task (1 Timothy 3:1–13; 2 Timothy 2:21; Titus 1:5–9; 1 Peter 5:1–3). This is not a casual search but a deliberate process, rooted in prayer (Matthew 9:35–38), shaped by the wisdom of experienced mentors, and grounded in a rigorous assessment of each candidate’s readiness to face the spiritual, cultural, and practical demands of cross-cultural ministry. Not everyone who wants to go is ready to lead. Identifying the right leaders is foundational to the health and longevity of any missionary effort.
- 1) Training** - Identified leaders must be equipped with theological education and practical experience (2 Timothy 2:2, 15; Titus. 1:9). Bible knowledge is not enough. They must demonstrate maturity in their faith, understand the dynamics of leadership, as well as grasp the importance of language, culture, discipleship, cross-cultural communication. Training must be rigorous, contextualized, and rooted in Scripture.
- 2) Mentoring** - Mentorship is indispensable in shaping effective missionary leaders. Books and classes are helpful, but they cannot replace mentors. Experienced leaders offer more than instruction—they provide wisdom, encouragement, and accountability that younger leaders desperately need as they step into challenging roles. This personal investment not only accelerates the maturity of emerging leaders but also cultivates continuity, unity, and a shared sense of purpose across the broader missionary movement. This is how Paul trained Timothy—through personal investment and relational instruction.
- 3) Ongoing Support** - The deployment of missionary leaders is not the end of their preparation—it marks the beginning of an ongoing need for support. To remain effective and resilient, these leaders require continued spiritual encouragement, opportunities for professional growth, and practical help as they navigate the complexities of cross-cultural ministry.



This support will be rooted in a commitment to ongoing prayer for the ministry (Romans 15:31–33; 2 Corinthians 1:11; Ephesians 6:18–20; 1 Thessalonians 5:25; 2 Thessalonians 3:1–2; Colossians 4:2). When churches and mission agencies provide this kind of support, they not only strengthen the leaders themselves but also demonstrate a lasting commitment to the long-term success of the mission.

Church-Based Missionary Training

A local church bears the primary responsibility for identifying, training, and sending missionaries. Missionary preparation, therefore, must be rooted in the local church—not outsourced to institutions—because it is the church that guards sound doctrine, nurtures spiritual maturity, and provides meaningful accountability. Both men and women sensing a call to missions must be examined, affirmed, and equipped within the community that knows their character, observes their gifting, and discipless them in gospel faithfulness. The church must see missionary training as an extension of its disciple-making and leadership development ministries.

For men called to long-term missionary careers—often in church planting, pastoral leadership, or theological education—the church must provide for robust theological and ministry training. This includes in-depth instruction in Scripture, doctrine, and missiology, alongside practical preparation in preaching, evangelism, discipleship, counseling, and leadership. These men should be trained as pastors and shepherds, not merely sent as missiologists or strategists. For most men, this will involve some level of formal training through seminary classes. Cross-cultural readiness, language acquisition, and spiritual resilience must also be prioritized, all under the direct mentorship of qualified elders who model faithfulness in life and doctrine. If married, men must be trained to lead their homes in the midst of ministry pressures and potential isolation. Efforts should be made to give men exposure to short-term trips so that their leadership in cross-cultural contexts can be evaluated. In addition, missionary trainees should seek out local, cross-cultural evangelism opportunities (e.g., refugee communities).

For women desiring to serve in biblically appropriate support roles, the church must also provide meaningful preparation. This includes theological grounding,



mentoring in biblical womanhood, and training in areas such as hospitality, children's ministry, crisis care, and administrative service. Women should be equipped to disciple other women, offer sound Biblical counsel, provide logistical support, and serve alongside missionary teams in ways that uphold the beauty of God's design for gender roles while advancing the work of the gospel. Their training should be practical, relational, and anchored in their identity as faithful church members and servants of Christ. Women who plan to serve in support roles should obtain training in fields like medicine, education, or logistics, provided they are rooted in strong biblical convictions and connected to the local church's mission.

Ultimately, church-based missionary training affirms that the mission field is not a place to prove oneself but a place to pour out what has already been proven through faithful service at home. The sending church must know its missionaries well, stand behind them confidently, and support them prayerfully and relationally. A church that takes missionary training seriously builds up laborers who are not only theologically sound but spiritually mature, relationally accountable, and missionally prepared to make disciples and plant churches that endure for the glory of Christ.

The Role of Women in Missions

What role do women have in missions? Scripture is clear, women and men are equally created in the image of God, possessing equal personhood, but distinct in roles designed by God to complement one another (Genesis 1:27; 1 Peter 3:7; Galatians 3:28). Scripture is explicit about the roles of men and women in church leadership, including churches on the mission field. Women are not to hold the authority reserved for elder-qualified men, as outlined in 1 Timothy 2:11–15 and 3:1–13. As such, a sending church should not support women in leadership roles that involve the establishment or oversight of local churches.

Women, however, often play a key part in the mission field. Missionary wives, for example, serve as irreplaceable helpers and co-laborers alongside their husbands. The Bible's vision of marriage—one that is grounded in mutual respect and complementary roles—sets the stage for this dynamic. In Genesis 2:18–24 and Ephesians 5:22–24, we see that God designed the woman to be the husband's helper, his partner in the work He has called them to do. The



missionary wife's role is not secondary but central. She shares in the sacrifices of ministry, whether it is leaving behind family, homeland, or comfort, or facing loneliness and the challenges of cross-cultural life. Her faithfulness to God's calling is often tested in the crucible of difficult and demanding circumstances. In Titus 2:3–5 and Proverbs 31:10–31, we see that the Christian wife's responsibility is not diminished by these challenges but made more glorious in her perseverance.

Moreover, the Bible places clear, important ministry duties in the hands of women. Women are called to disciple other women (Titus 2:3–5), to teach children and train the next generation of believers (Psalm 78:4; 1 Timothy 2:15), to boldly evangelize (John 4:39), and to offer hospitality (Romans 16:3–5; Acts 16:14–15; 1 Peter 4:9). Their service is vital for the spiritual formation of the church and the kingdom of God.

The New Testament provides several examples of faithful and fruitful women involved in the ministries of both Jesus and the Apostle Paul. These passages demonstrate that while the roles of women were distinct from those of leadership roles reserved for men, the contributions of these women were honored and strategic to the advancement of the gospel. Women were not only present but actively supported Jesus' ministry through financial and logistical means (Luke 8:1–3). Moreover, Paul commends multiple women for their diligent labor in the ministry of the church, including Phoebe, Prisca, Mary and Tryphosa (Romans 16:1–6, 12; cf. Acts 18:24–26)

However, just as men, the importance of character and faithfulness in women cannot be overlooked. Women, too, must be proven faithful in their character and ministry experience. Whether serving as missionary wives or in support ministries, women must be affirmed in their calling, demonstrated by their faithfulness to God and their proven abilities to serve in various ministry capacities. This is not a secondary matter but foundational to the success and sustainability of missions work. Women in missions should be evaluated, affirmed, and entrusted with responsibilities that align with their unique calling and the distinct role God has given them in His mission. Strategic involvement of women in missions could involve short-term or longer-term service to missionary families or teams. Women with practical skills in education, children's ministry, women's ministry, administration, discipleship, and



counseling can be an asset to any field. Just as other missionary candidates they should be theological prepared, possess high Bible literacy, and practical ministry skills. Though women serving on the mission field have the potential for great contributions, unique challenges do exist which include support raising, vulnerability, and sufficient on-field shepherding. Therefore, it should be expected that such opportunities are unique and selective, especially for long-term service.

In summary, while we hold firmly to the biblical teaching that women are not called to leadership roles that involve establishing and equipping churches, we also stand firmly on the belief that women are absolutely essential to missions work. We must embrace the fullness of God's design for both men and women, affirming their vital contributions in missions and ensuring that both genders are equipped to serve in ways that glorify God and advance His kingdom.

Conclusion

Qualified and gifted leaders are indispensable to the success of missionary partnerships. They bring vision, craft strategy, and foster the relational unity needed to advance the gospel effectively. Their leadership ensures that missionary efforts remain faithful to Scripture, attuned to cultural realities, and wisely executed—preserving the integrity of the message and the health of the local church.

The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers—especially the capable ones—are few. If we want to see churches planted, disciples made, and nations reached, we must stop treating leadership as an afterthought. The church must rise with purpose. We must call out the called, train the sent, and support the proven.



6. The Need for Indigenous (National) Leadership

Missionaries Must Partner with and Serve Under Indigenous Church Leadership

Cross-cultural missions is a task of great urgency and complexity. As the gospel crosses national and cultural borders, missionaries must grapple with how to establish churches that are not only faithful and gospel-centered, but also sustainable and locally rooted. A vital key to this is partnering with—and placing themselves under—the leadership of indigenous (national) believers. This model rightly prioritizes the training and empowering of local Christians to lead the mission within their own context. When embraced, this approach results in churches that are reproducible, culturally embedded, and far better positioned to advance the Kingdom of God in a lasting and transformative way.

Biblical Foundation for Entrusting Ministry to Indigenous Leadership

The call to partner with and submit to national church leadership is not merely a matter of strategy—it is grounded in the clear example of Scripture. The Apostle Paul’s approach to missions offers a compelling blueprint: plant churches, raise up leaders from within, and entrust the ongoing work to them. In 2 Timothy 2:2, Paul instructs Timothy to “entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also,” underscoring the necessity of training indigenous leaders who can multiply the ministry in their own context. The necessity of training for faithful is a real prerequisite, but a transition of “entrusting” the ministry to these men must be intentional. In fact, the missionary needs to be more intentional in replacing himself than the local US pastor who might simply develop ministry and delegate. Whether long-term or short-term, the missionary needs to cultivate the mindset that his role is temporary.

Likewise, Acts 14:23 records that Paul and Barnabas “appointed elders for them in every church,” delegating leadership to local believers who possessed the cultural insight and community trust essential for effective shepherding. This pattern of empowering local leadership reveals a deep confidence in God’s ability to raise up capable men from every nation and culture.



Even Jesus demonstrated this model. Though He possessed all authority, He chose to invest deeply in a small group of disciples, preparing them to carry forward His mission. He did not dominate the ministry but multiplied it by empowering others. When missionaries honor and work under national church leadership, they walk in the same humility and wisdom.

This biblical model promotes long-term gospel growth and affirms the dignity and calling of the global body of Christ.

The Advantages of Indigenous Leadership

Partnering with national church leaders yields a host of benefits that are both biblically grounded and practically effective. Indigenous leadership strengthens the church from within, fostering authenticity, sustainability, and contextual wisdom. It also promotes deeper community trust, more effective discipleship, and long-term impact as local believers are equipped to lead, shepherd, and multiply ministry in their own cultural context. This approach not only honors the biblical model but also enhances the credibility and fruitfulness of gospel work among the nations.

- 1) Cultural Relevance** - One of the most compelling advantages of indigenous leadership is its deep cultural relevance. National leaders possess an intuitive understanding of their community's language, customs, values, and traditions. This enables them to articulate the gospel in ways that connect meaningfully with the hearts of their people, while avoiding the missteps that often accompany cross-cultural communication. Though foreign missionaries may have extensive training and bring sincere intentions, they frequently face challenges in fully grasping the subtleties of a new cultural landscape. In contrast, local leaders are naturally equipped to convey biblical truth with clarity and sensitivity, without compromising its integrity.

Cultural relevance also informs how ministry is practiced. From worship styles and discipleship methods to community involvement and daily church life, churches led by national leaders are more likely to understand the values of the local context and show due honor to its



identity and traditions. This makes the church feel less foreign and more familiar—drawing people in rather than pushing them away.

- 2) Reproducibility** - Churches led by indigenous leaders are naturally more reproducible within their own cultural and national settings. When leadership, vision, and resources come from within the local context, the church becomes less reliant on external funding, foreign oversight, or international organizations. This kind of local sustainability enables churches to grow, mature, and multiply without the bottleneck of foreign dependency.

Furthermore, a reproducible model inspires ownership. When believers see leaders who share their language, background, and daily realities, they are more likely to embrace the church as their own and actively engage in its mission. This deep sense of belonging fuels long-term discipleship and church-planting momentum—laying the groundwork for gospel expansion that is both faithful and self-sustaining.

- 3) Sustainable Ministry** - Missionaries who invest in raising up local leadership set the stage for enduring fruitfulness. Instead of fostering dependence on foreign presence or support, they equip and mentor indigenous leaders who can carry the mission forward long after outside help has departed. This strategy fulfills the heart of the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19) by cultivating disciple-making communities that are both spiritually mature and structurally self-sustaining, capable of growth, adaptability, and long-term resilience.

Moreover, churches under national leadership are better prepared to withstand local pressures—be they political, social, or economic. When foreign missionaries are restricted or forced to leave, a strong network of trained local leaders ensures that gospel ministry continues without disruption.



Challenges of Traditional Missionary Models

Although the value of indigenous leadership is clear, traditional missionary models frequently fail to fully embrace this approach. Whether by design or oversight, these models can create barriers that limit the church's growth and diminish its long-term effectiveness

- 1) Dependency on Foreign Resources** - Traditional missionary models frequently foster a problematic dependence on outside resources—whether financial aid, foreign personnel, or strategic direction. Such reliance not only weakens the independence of local believers but also exposes the church to instability, as its vitality becomes contingent on the priorities and economic conditions of foreign sponsors.
- 2) Cultural Misalignment** - Even with sincere intentions, foreign missionaries often struggle to fully integrate into the local culture. Their leadership, though well-intentioned, can unintentionally impose foreign values and methods that conflict with indigenous ways of life. This cultural misalignment can distort the perception of Christianity, making it seem like a foreign religion rather than the universal truth it is.
- 3) Failure to Cultivate Sustainable Leadership** - Mission strategies that center on foreign-led initiatives frequently neglect the essential task of training and empowering local leaders. As a result, when missionaries withdraw, the local church is left without capable leadership—slowing momentum and stifling organic growth from within.



Principles for Effective Missionary Partnerships

To overcome the pitfalls of dependency and disconnection, churches and mission agencies must commit to principles that prioritize indigenous leadership and long-term sustainability.

- 1) Empower, Don't Control** - Missionaries must embrace the role of catalysts—those who ignite and support gospel work, not those who command it. This posture demands humility and trust: patience when you don't fully understand the cultural dynamics and a willingness to step aside and let national leaders take rightful ownership of ministry decisions informed by their intimate understanding of the local context.
- 2) Prioritize Leadership Development** - Lasting impact begins with leadership development. Missionary partnerships should center on training local believers through robust theological education, hands-on ministry experience, and intentional discipleship and mentorship. The aim is to cultivate leaders who are biblically grounded, spiritually mature, and equipped to shepherd the church with conviction and clarity.
- 3) Respect Local Autonomy** - True partnership respects the God-given authority of national leaders. While collaboration is vital, decision-making must ultimately reside with those who will bear the long-term responsibility for the mission. Missionaries are guests—supportive allies, not governing authorities.
- 4) Contextualize Without Compromise** - The gospel must be communicated in culturally meaningful ways without diluting its truth. Effective missions require listening to national leaders even as you train them to faithfully interpret and apply Scripture within their context. Contextualization should never compromise biblical integrity but rather illuminate it through local lenses.



Conclusion

The urgency of partnering with missionaries who serve under the leadership of national churches cannot be overstated. This model must become the norm, not the exception. It is a strategy rooted in biblical wisdom and proven by experience: the gospel advances most powerfully when local believers are entrusted, equipped, and empowered to lead the charge.

Churches and mission agencies must reorient their priorities—championing missionaries who embody humility, serve from beneath, and elevate indigenous leadership. This is not a matter of preference; it is a matter of faithfulness. The future of global missions rests on our willingness to pursue partnerships marked by Christlike submission, mutual respect, and a shared vision for the flourishing of the church in every culture.

When we align ourselves with God's design—honoring the role of local leaders and supporting their efforts—we not only fulfill the Great Commission, but we also display the manifold wisdom of God to the world. This is how missions must move forward: not through control, but through cooperation; not through dominance, but through discipleship.



7. The Need for Effective Strategy

Effective Strategies from the New Testament Model

Effective mission work must be guided by intentional strategy, not scattered activity. The Great Commission compels the church to proclaim the gospel to all nations, making disciples and teaching obedience to Christ (Matthew 28:18–20). This divine mandate demands more than passion, it requires precision.

The Apostle Paul's ministry provides a compelling model: he concentrated his efforts on key urban centers, recognizing their potential to serve as gospel launching points to entire regions. By investing in major population centers (places of influence and connectivity) Paul multiplied the reach of his ministry. These cities became epicenters of disciple-making and theological instruction, where churches were established, leaders were trained, and the gospel spread outward with power and speed. If the modern church would recover and replicate this strategy, missionary partnerships would be positioned for deeper impact and more enduring fruit.

Paul's Strategic Urban Focus

Paul's missionary journeys were anything but random. He deliberately targeted cities that stood at the crossroads of cultural, political, and economic life in the Roman world—places like Corinth, Ephesus, and Rome. These urban hubs functioned as platforms from which the gospel could echo throughout entire provinces. The churches planted in these cities weren't mere local gatherings; they became strongholds of truth and centers of multiplication, raising up leaders and sending them into surrounding towns and villages.

This is the wisdom the church must reclaim today: focus efforts where the gospel can spread fastest and take deepest root. In doing so, we walk in the footsteps of Paul—and more importantly, in obedience to the strategic vision embedded in Christ's commission.



Examples from the New Testament

- 1) **Philippi** - Philippi, a Roman colony in Macedonia, was a significant city targeted by Paul. In Acts 16, Paul and his companions established a church in Philippi after responding to a vision calling them to “come over to Macedonia and help us” (Acts 16:9). This church became one of Paul’s most faithful prayer and financial partners in ministry, as evidenced by his gratitude in the letter to the Philippians. Philippi’s location along a major Roman road, the Via Egnatia, made it a strategic base for the spread of the gospel throughout the region.
- 2) **Thessalonica** - Thessalonica was the largest city in Macedonia and a major trade hub and became another key focus of Paul’s missionary activity. According to Acts 17, Paul preached in the synagogue there for three consecutive Sabbaths, resulting in conversions among both Jews and Gentiles. The church that emerged became a model of vitality and evangelistic fervor. Paul commended them, saying, “Your faith in God has gone forth everywhere” (1 Thess. 1:8).

What makes Thessalonica strategic is not only its size and affluence but also its influence as a cultural and commercial leader. The church’s strong witness in such a city demonstrated how urban congregations could become multipliers of gospel proclamation. Through its example and outreach, the church at Thessalonica impacted regions far beyond its own boundaries.

- 3) **Corinth** - Corinth was situated on a narrow isthmus connecting the eastern and western parts of the Roman Empire. Corinth presented a different kind of challenge. Known for its moral decay and cosmopolitan diversity, it was a melting pot of cultures, ideologies, and vices. Yet Paul saw in it an opportunity for wide-reaching influence.

Paul spent a year and a half in Corinth (Acts 18), establishing a church that, despite significant internal struggles, became a beacon of gospel truth and transformation. His letters to the Corinthians reveal a deep pastoral investment in shaping a community that could stand firm



amidst cultural chaos. Corinth proved that even in morally compromised environments, the gospel can take root and produce lasting change.

4) Ephesus - Ephesus was the crown jewel of Asia Minor—wealthy, religiously significant, and centrally located. Home to the Temple of Artemis, one of the ancient world's most revered religious sites, Ephesus also boasted a thriving marketplace and an intellectual atmosphere. Paul spent two years there, teaching daily in the hall of Tyrannus (Acts 19), and equipping believers for ministry.

The results were staggering: “All the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks” (Acts 19:10). Ephesus became not only a church-planting center but also a leadership development hub. Future leaders like Timothy and the Apostle John were deeply connected to its ministry. Ephesus exemplifies how investing deeply in one strategic location can yield region-wide transformation.

5) Rome - Rome, the capital of the empire, represented the apex of Paul's missionary vision. His letter to the Romans expresses a longing to strengthen the church there and use it as a launchpad for reaching Spain and the western reaches of the empire (Rom. 15:22–24). Though Paul arrived in Rome as a prisoner (Acts 28), he remained undeterred—preaching and teaching while under house arrest.

Rome's influence was unmatched. To plant the gospel firmly in its heart was to strike at the center of the known world. Even in chains, Paul used the strategic significance of Rome to advance the cause of Christ. His presence there established a foundation for the eventual growth of Christianity across the empire.



Why Metropolitan Centers Matter

Paul's strategic focus on major cities provides a timeless model for effective missionary work. He understood that if the gospel could take root in places of influence, it would naturally extend to the surrounding areas through the rhythms of life, commerce, and travel. Today's churches and mission agencies would do well to recover this vision—targeting cities not simply because they are populated, but because they are pivotal. The urban church, grounded in biblical truth and empowered by the Spirit, remains one of the most effective tools for fulfilling the Great Commission.

- 1) Centers of Influence** - Metropolitan areas shape the cultural, political, and economic life of entire regions. Trends that emerge in cities often spread to smaller towns and rural communities. By establishing strong, gospel-centered churches in these influential locations, missionaries position the gospel to flow outward with cultural momentum. Urban churches become launching points for regional and even international impact.
- 2) Diversity and Reach** - Cities draw people from across ethnic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds—immigrants, students, professionals, and travelers. This convergence presents a unique opportunity: reaching the nations without leaving one location. When the gospel transforms people from diverse communities, they become natural carriers of that message back to their places of origin, multiplying the reach of urban missions exponentially.
- 3) Accessibility of Resources** - Urban environments often provide superior infrastructure—transportation, education, technology, and communication, all of which can be leveraged for kingdom work. These resources help missionaries train indigenous leaders, produce and distribute gospel materials, and organize outreach that extends beyond the city's borders.



In short, cities are strategic—not merely because they are large, but because they are influential. To reach the world, we must reach the cities. Urban missions is not just one strategy among many; it is a biblical and effective model for global gospel advancement.

4) Advancement of the Gospel - Due to the diversity, anonymity, and size found in urban centers, it is not uncommon for churches to grow proportionally faster than in other settings. Obviously, God is sovereign in salvation and the Spirit moves as He wills. However, in urban settings, people tend to be more comfortable with diverse ideas and messages, which can provide openness to break through cultural barriers. In smaller towns and villages, especially where Christianity is a minority religion, community pressure and tradition can inhibit church growth.

Practical Applications for Modern Missions

To faithfully apply Paul's missionary model today, churches and mission agencies must adopt intentional strategies that focus on metropolitan centers without losing sight of the broader mission field. The following practical steps can help guide such efforts:

- 1) Strategic City Selection** - Missionaries should prioritize cities of significant influence—trade hubs, political capitals, university towns, and cultural epicenters. These urban centers often shape the values and direction of surrounding regions. Careful research and demographic analysis should inform these decisions to ensure that mission efforts are wisely and effectively targeted.
- 2) Urban Church Planting** - Church planting in major cities requires more than simply replicating suburban models. Urban contexts demand cultural awareness, theological clarity, and pastoral resilience. Churches must be prepared to minister across diverse ethnic, economic, and ideological lines. Training programs focused on urban ministry and partnerships with seasoned church planters are essential to meet the complex demands of city life.



- 3) Leadership Development** - Developing indigenous leadership is crucial for long-term impact. Metropolitan churches must invest in discipleship, theological education, and pastoral training. This approach echoes Paul's practice of appointing qualified elders to lead local congregations (Titus 1:5). Raising up leaders from within ensures the church's longevity and capacity to multiply.
- 4) Urban Needs** - Many people seek out urban centers for opportunities in education, healthcare, justice, and economic stability. By addressing these issues in the context of the gospel, the missionary can present tangible expressions of Christ's love and open doors for gospel witness and may call for formal programs to reach the community. The missionary should be careful not to allow these type ministries to become a distraction from the hard work of church-planting. However, the missionary should feel the freedom and take the initiative to leverage resources, especially in the form of supporters and short-term ministry teams, to serve their communities in tangible, focused, strategic ways.
- 5) Networking and Partnerships** - Missionaries must not work in isolation. Effective urban ministry thrives through collaboration with local churches, global mission networks, and trusted partners. As Paul relied on coworkers like Timothy and Aquila and Priscilla, modern missionaries should build strong partnerships to extend their reach and strengthen their work.

By implementing these principles, the church can fulfill its mission with wisdom and effectiveness, particularly in the influential corridors of the world's great cities.



Conclusion

The New Testament offers a compelling model for missions that centers on major metropolitan areas. As global demographics shift and cities swell with growing populations, the urgency to plant vibrant, gospel-centered churches in these centers of influence has never been greater. Cities are not only home to the majority of the world's people but also serve as cultural, economic, and intellectual engines that shape entire nations.

The Apostle Paul's consistent focus on cities like Ephesus, Corinth, Philippi, Thessalonica, and Rome reveals a deliberate and strategic approach to advancing the gospel. These urban centers served as platforms for broad regional influence, enabling the rapid spread of the gospel through established churches and trained leaders. Paul's strategy was missionally wise and divinely effective.

By intentionally targeting metropolitan areas, today's churches and mission organizations can reach a wide spectrum of society, disciple believers from varied backgrounds, and train indigenous leaders to multiply the work. This approach reflects the Great Commission's call to make disciples of all nations and ensures that the gospel continues to spread both deep and wide.



8. Financial Policies

It is the privilege and responsibility of the local church to meet the financial needs of each individual missionary (1 Corinthians 9:1-18; Galatians 6:6; Philippians 1:5; 4:15-20; 1 Timothy 5:17-18; 3 John 5-8). In an effort to faithfully shepherd and care for our missionaries on the field, we emphasize quality of relationship rather than quantity. Therefore, the financial support of the church will be directed to a concentration of missionaries who are truly gifted, called, and qualified to effectively carry out the work in a biblical and God-honoring way. This enables us 1) to more effectively shepherd each missionary; 2) to be more intimately involved in their ministry work through continual prayer, regular correspondence, and periodic field visits; and 3) to provide a level of ongoing training and encouragement through the sending of resources (books and articles), counseling, teaching seminars on the field.

The Missions Budget

The annual missions budget is set and approved by the Board of Elders.

Contributions to Missions

Biblical giving and the tax deductibility of contributions to missionaries and mission agencies is directly affected by the following considerations:

- 1) Designated Giving** - Since Faith Community Church operates on a unified budget, members are encouraged to give directly to the operating budget of the church, from which missionary support is allocated.
- 2) Transmission of Gifts** - Gifts designated for specific missionaries, short-term trips, projects, or mission agencies may not be channeled through the Faith Community Church accounting department for transmission to the designee. Donors are encouraged to forward such gifts directly to the missionary or to the mission agency concerned, where their tax- deductible eligibility will be determined.



- 3) Approved Designations** - Designated gifts for special one-time projects or appeals must be approved and announced by the Board of Elders. These offerings shall be regarded as over and above the regular missions budget.
- 4) Recognized Ministries or Groups in the Church** - Groups (i.e., Youth Group, College Group, Community Groups, etc.) shall be free to raise designated offerings for special projects or special one-time gifts to approved missionaries. Such funding shall be considered as over and above the annual missions budget. These groups may not assume recurring support commitments to individuals or projects. All contributions made by Faith Community Church groups shall be subject to the guidelines and criteria of the Faith Community Church missions policy. In each instance, the Missions Support Team shall be informed of the project and the Elders must give their approval.
- 5) Bequests** - Bequests specifically designated for missions, for the support of Faith Community Church missionaries, or for approved mission projects, shall be honored so long as they are in keeping with this policy.
- 6) Disbursements** - All missionary support and grants to boards, ministries, and projects shall be made from the missions budget.

Funding Shortfall

In the event that budgetary shortfalls affect current support and project commitments, the following procedure shall apply:

- Budgetary commitments classified as projects or those subject to annual review shall first be examined and should absorb the majority of the initial reductions.
- Budgetary commitments involving institutions and non-personal commitments should be examined and appropriately reduced or dropped. Individual missionaries or agencies would be evaluated as to



which of them are least essential in the proclamation of the gospel, or as being non-proportionate in respect to other support levels and appropriate measures taken. Upon completion of the above steps, all remaining support commitments would be reduced proportionately as may be necessary.

Funding Surplus

Any residual surplus of funds at the end of the church fiscal year may be allocated by the Board of Elders according to the priorities they discern. Input may be sought by the Elders from missionary partners.

Prioritization of Support Levels

Financial prioritization is based on the philosophy and biblical objectives outlined above. Support levels will be prioritized according to the following four categories.

A. Ministry Assignment

- Church planting
- Leadership training
- Church strengthening
- Support roles (directly tied to points 1-3 above)

B. Their level of training and/or preparation for their intended role

C. Church Involvement

- FCC member actively serving in a leadership capacity
- FCC member actively serving
- Non-FCC member actively serving in a leadership capacity in a like-minded church
- Non-FCC member actively serving in a like-minded church.

It is also our desire to emphasize quality of relationship over quantity. Therefore, financial support will be directed to a concentration of missionaries at a higher percentage of the missionaries' overall support.



Gap Between Appointment and Arrival

The time between a worker's appointment and his arrival on the field should not exceed a period of two years, excluding any pre-field education, internship assignments, or extenuating circumstances. Faith Community Church will reevaluate its commitment at the end of the first year of the missionary's deputation and reserves the right to terminate the commitment of support for a missionary who fails to evidence satisfactory progress in discovering support sources or who otherwise fails to demonstrate initiative and industry in their deputation.

Support Details

Initial payment of the support allotment shall be decided by the Elders. In most cases, support will begin upon departure for the field or for pre-assignment training. Payments are normally made every month by check directly to the mission agency under which the missionary is assigned.

Suspension and/or Termination of Financial Support

Faith Community Church support may be suspended and/or terminated in the event that a missionary:

- Deviates from the Faith Community Church doctrinal position, ministry philosophy, and/or missions policy.
- Is reported by a local church or his mission agency as subject of a discipline or performance problem.
- Is culpable of specific incompetence, misconduct, or persistent behavior unbecoming a believer, reasonable and convincing evidence of such having been established.
- Resigns from his agency.
- Is receiving full support from other sources.
- Changes agency assignment or affiliation without prior communication with Faith Community Church and approval of the Elders.
- Assumes employment during furlough (or at other times) that significantly hinders missionary activities.



- Enters an educational program which has not been discussed with and approved by the Elders or otherwise interrupts ministry activity for other than normal vacation, furlough, or board-mandated assignments.
- Consistently fails to submit quarterly newsletters or reports to Faith Community Church or otherwise fails to fulfill responsibilities to Faith Community Church as outlined in this policy.

In the case of temporary support suspension, request for reinstatement will be carefully and prayerfully considered by the Elders.

Furlough Support

Furlough support will be continued during the regular furlough period. In the event that furlough is extended beyond the established period, the Elders will review the circumstances and shall determine how long Faith Community Church support shall continue.

Retirement Support

It is expected that approved mission boards and agencies have retirement programs in place for career workers and that a percentage of support funds will be designated for retirement; therefore, Faith Community Church will not provide support after retirement.

Honorariums for Visiting Missionary Speakers

Honorariums for visiting missionary speakers should be handled through the regular church budget, based upon church policy regarding visiting speakers.

Appeals for funds by missionary speakers may be made only upon recommendation by the Board of Elders and may be in the form of a special offering at the time the missionary speaks.

Support Year

The support year of Faith Community Church shall correspond with the church fiscal year.



Christmas Offering

Faith Community Church aims to have an annual offering for support of our missionaries each December. All gifts received from December 1–31 which are designated for “missions” will be divided among both our domestic and international missions partners, with priority being given to our international partners.



9. Short-Term Ministry Trips

Short term ministry trips are common in contemporary evangelical circles in America. But sadly, these trips often fit descriptions like these: “missionary tourism”, humanitarian aid without clear Gospel proclamation, ministry activities and events that are more logistically burdensome to missionaries than helpful, or evangelism that focuses on decisions not disciple-making in a local church. Additionally, even potentially fruitful efforts can inadvertently accomplish what could be more effectively done indigenously.

However, missionaries report that when prayerfully and thoughtfully planned, short-term ministry trips provide encouragement to like-minded believers around the world. These trips can be a tangible foretaste of the eternal fellowship that we long for when God’s people from every tribe, tongue, people and nation are finally gathered as one.

What must control us in these endeavors is a genuine care for the wellbeing of the missionary and ministry. These ministry trips should serve in tasks that are requested by the missionary.

Definition of Short-Term Ministry Trips

Short-term ministry projects involve the sending of a believer or a group of believers to a local or global mission field to assist a church-approved missionary or indigenous church for a period of less than 2 years. We intentionally use the language of short-term ministry to distinguish between short term ministry workers and missionaries who have different expectations. Short-term trips should always be in association and agreement with a church-supported missionary or with an already- established indigenous church in order to ensure that there is a strategy for further discipleship of people who were the ministry focus of the trip.



Purpose of Short-Term Ministry Teams

Short-term ministry projects can increase the effectiveness of a church's involvement on the mission field in several ways. Short-term ministry projects can:

- Raise interest and awareness, as well as energize and excite the local church regarding missions.
- Help both the local church leadership and potential missionary candidates assess their calling to full-time, career missionary service.
- Provide an opportunity to shepherd, encourage, and support missionaries already on the field, as well as to further equip and train them for maximum ministry effectiveness.
- Accomplish specific goals, tasks, and projects including preaching and teaching, pastoral leadership training and evangelism, work-related construction projects, or other wholistic ministry projects.
- Help the local church gain a better understanding of the needs of missionaries (i.e., prayer, resources, training, construction, etc.).
- Assist the indigenous local church (where it already exists) when individuals or teams are invited to help strengthen and train such a church.

Guidelines for Short-Term Ministry Trips

Short-term ministry trips must:

- Be consistent with Faith Community Church's stated goals and purposes as delineated in this missions policy and approved by the Elders.
- Be led by a Faith Community Church elder, staff member, or elder-approved lay leader, or another approved organization.
- Be directly tied to a known, church-based ministry approved by the Elders of Faith Community Church (preferably a FCC-supported missionary).
- Be approved by the missionary to ensure that the trip will actually be a benefit and help to their ministry and not a burden or hindrance.
- Be approved by the Elders of Faith Community Church.
- Ensure participants must meet the stated requirements of this policy.



Requirements for all Short-Term Ministry Trip Candidates

Short-term ministry trip candidates must meet the following criteria:

- Have made a clear profession of faith in Jesus Christ and show evidence of the fruit of the Spirit.
- An interest in missions.
- A level of spiritual maturity appropriate for the needs of the trip.
- An ability to clearly communicate the gospel.
- Must be appropriately skilled for what they are sent to accomplish.
- Make a commitment to the stated mission, purpose, and goal of the trip.
- Must be a Faith Community Church member. Non-members will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- Must fill out a short-term mission application and complete an interview with the trip leader.
- Must be willing to submit to the authority of Scripture and the appointed leadership of the trip.
- Must successfully complete the necessary pre-trip training and reading requirements, as established by the team leader.
- Must raise and/or provide his/her own support for the trip, typically at least two-thirds of the total cost for their involvement of the ministry trip.



10. Recommended Reading

Archer, Clint. *Holding the Rope: Short-term Missions, Long-Term Impact*. William Carey Library, 2014.

Burnett, Chris, et al. *Biblical Missions Workbook: Principles, Priorities, and Practices*. Thomas Nelson Incorporated, 2025.

Doran, David M. *For the Sake of His Name*. Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary, 2018.

Dormer, Jan Edwards. *Language Learning in Ministry: Preparing for Cross-Cultural Language Acquisition*. William Carey Publishing, 2021.

Naselli, Andrew David, and J. D. Crowley. *Conscience: What It Is, How to Train It, and Loving Those Who Differ*. Crossway, 2016.

Packer, J. I. *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*. IVP Books, 1961,

Schnabel, Eckhard J. *Paul the Missionary: Realities, Strategies and Methods*. IVP Academic, 2008.

Sills, Michael David. *Reaching and Teaching: A Call to Great Commission Obedience*. Moody Publishers, 2010.

Smallman, William H. *Able to Teach Others Also: Nationalizing Global Ministry Training*. Mandate Press, 2001.