

Company of the Committed

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The share of the man who stayed by the supplies is to be the same as that of him who went down to the battle.
-1 Samuel 30:24 NIV

David recognized a critical fact about warfare: support troops are as essential as those who go into battle. He ruled that their reward must be the same. The Lord has earlier ordered that the Israelites were to divide the spoils between the soldiers who took part in the battle and the rest of the community who made it possible for them to go (Numbers 31:27). No army, regardless of their strength, can long survive without support and supply.

FINDING OUR ROLES

While all Christians are called to participate in reaching the nations, only some are sent out cross-culturally. A zeal for the spread of the Gospel can be lived out in many ways. When we strategize to complete the task, the focus of our attention must not only include missionary concerns at the front lines but also go beyond them to support and supply as well. Unless all these roles are filled, worldwide missions quickly grind to a halt.

Every believer can discover roles for which God has equipped them. Paul's examples of the interdependence of the body of Christ in 1

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with intensity, focus, perseverance, and sacrifice. All are full participants in the company of the

Corinthians 12 show that every believer has a vital part to play. This is as applicable to God's worldwide plans as it is to a local church. Nothing is more energizing to a field worker than the backing of a dedicated sender, mobilizer, welcome, or intercessor fulfilling his ministry

committed. Since churches and biographies often highlight the role of those who go, we will instead begin with the other options.

SENDERS

Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only...you sent aid once and again for my necessities.

-Philippians 4:15-16

Paul deeply valued his partnership with the Philippian church, who acted as true senders: backing his missionary endeavors with prayer, concern, involvement, and provision, while actively ministering at home. Paul and the church at Philippi thought of themselves as a team. Without the participation of a team of committed senders – both churches and individuals – no missionary will ever win his target people group. Conservative estimates are that, for one person to go, there needs to be a team of six to thirty active senders.

It Can't Be Done Alone

Individuals are wonderful, but individuals alone are never sufficient. Churches, agencies, and lay people together must embrace the vision. They work in tandem to care both for the missionaries and their target people. Only as a team can they provide the stability, wisdom, guidance, and

longevity to persevere to completion. In the days of the Student Volunteer Movement, more than 100,000 volunteered to go to the field. Only about 20,000 actually went, largely because of a lack of senders.

Sending is not the only way to participate in international work from home base.

Someone must sound the rallying call.

Senders are often unaware of the critical importance of their task. They usually do their work behind the scenes, isolated from one another. Thanks or public

recognition seldom comes their way. Effective senders, therefore, operate on an inner conviction that their investments in the Gospel grow out of God's specific call on their lives. They also recognize that sending requires as much discipline and commitment as going.

Senders Are Vital

Two key ingredients combine in the ministry of most senders: generosity and intercession. There is constant pressure in our culture to conform lifestyle to income, but senders strive to resist this. Many chose to adopt a lifestyle comparable to that of missionaries on the field, to free more income for support. Some dedicated senders quietly give away half of their income or more for the spread of the Gospel.

Prayer flows out of giving. In Matthew 6:21, Jesus said, "For *where your treasure is*, there your heart will be also." In the Kingdom economy, investment *precedes* heart involvement, not the other way around. Those who invest in others' ministries find it natural to life those they support and the target people to the Father in prayer. Countless missionaries affirm that the resultant prayer is even more vital to their work than funding.

Options for Senders

Senders' generosity of heart often includes other significant roles such as research and supplies. One whole ministry focuses on shipping needed materials to the field. Others serve as a backup resource to field workers doing needed research through sources available at home, but not on the

field, and sending it to the workers. Email and the Internet have opened whole new connections for these services.

A group of computer experts in Florida developed a ministry using their skills by training missionaries on computers and finding donated computers and software suitable for field needs. A dairyman provided cows to indigenous church planters so they could support their families without funding from outside their country. Accountants, teachers, bankers, business consultants, as well as medical and dental professionals use their proficiencies for mission undertakings. Their expertise may provide platforms for workers to enter restricted areas. Their deeds of love confirm the Gospel that full-time workers have been preaching.

MOBILIZERS

The Lord spoke to Moses, saying: 'Make two silver trumpets for yourself;...you shall use them for calling the congregation and for directing the movement of the camps.' -Numbers 10:1-2 NKJV

Sending is not the only way to participate in international work from home base. Someone must sound the rallying call. Those who desire to see others trained, prepared, and released to ministry are known as mobilizers. Mobilizers stir other Christians to active concern for reaching the world. They coordinate efforts between senders, the local church, sending agencies, and missionaries on the field.

Mobilizers are Essential

To understand the role of mobilizers, think of World War II as a parallel. Only 10% of the American population went to the war. Of those, only 1% were actually on the firing lines. However, for them to be successful in their mission, the entire country had to be mobilized! Seeing people find their place of significant service energizes mobilizers. They are often networkers and trainers. Rather than focusing on a single ministry, they delight to make known a full spectrum of possibilities from which each person can choose.

Often mobilizers provide teaching, practical help, and reassurance, motivating churches and helping them get under way. Mobilizers provide facts for

strategic involvement and encouraging God's people as they develop their distinctive roles. Completing our task will call for informed, servant-hearted, diligent mobilizers.

Drama and the Arts

In this increasingly visual age, skits, plays, dramas, paintings, film, videos, puppetry, mime, and even dance are being used to communicate God's mandate to His people. Dramatic presentations can be a powerful mobilizing tool. The story of God's heart for all nations forcefully communicated through these media often proves to be unforgettable!

Our rational culture sometimes underrates the significance and value of the arts for extending the Kingdom. However, Jesus Himself did not speak as a theologian; He told wonderful stories to get His message across. Many drama teams use those same parables as a model for their presentations. Significantly, Scriptural parables transfer across cultures with surprising effectiveness: the story of the prodigal son can tell deep truths to Thais or Berbers or Navajos.

WELCOMERS

The stranger who dwells among you shall be to you as one born among you, and you shall love him as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.

-Leviticus 19:34 NKJV

God prepared His own people to be sensitive to the needs of strangers by the lessons of their sojourn in Egypt. Even His own Son lived as a refugee in Egypt in His early years. Welcomers are those stirred by the needs of those ethnic groups who reside in the welcomer's home country. Welcomers seek opportunities to touch the lives of thousands of internationals who come to study, work, or emigrate permanently.

Welcomers are Strategic

Welcomers are especially crucial in reaching populations whose home countries restrict mission work. One missionary is working with a

very persecuted population in a highly volatile country in the Middle East. His greatest asset is the help of a vibrant national believer who hated Christians until he became a refugee and was sent to the United States. The Christians loved, helped, and resettled him. They won him to the Lord and took the time to disciple him. As a mature believer, he returned to his home country and now makes an impact the missionary could never have on his own.

The heart of this ministry grows out of the gift of hospitality (GK: *Philoxenia*, meaning "love of strangers"). Welcomers befriend people,

demonstrating the love of Christ in very practical ways. They may work with university students, diplomats, technical workers, refugees, military personnel, or immigrants. Instead of fearing new ethnic groups as a threat, Christians see their coming as a strategic opportunity for love and witness.

Churches Develop Welcoming Ministries

The church can develop special strategies, appropriate to each group. A ministry in Chicago works with

churches to present each new refugee family with a "Welcome to America" packet within a week after they arrive. Elsewhere, churches develop outreach around teaching English as a Second Language. One group uses the Ann Landers column. The class reads her advice to learn American idioms and discuss ideas. The students are exposed to Christian values (which often take issue with Ann's advice). They express their own ideas, which helps the leaders see where *they* are spiritually.

Effective welcomers learn all they can of the culture and language of their target people. Guest workers from Turkey are being reached in Germany. Christians in the Netherlands work with Indonesians who have relocated there. While living as students in Hungary, Mongolians were won to the Lord. Both language learning and cultural sensitivity contribute to making these ministries effective.

This highly convenient form of cross-cultural ministry also provides fruitful connections for anyone preparing for field service. A small college-age team wanted to explore the possibilities for getting into a closed country in North Africa. They got to know as many students from that country as possible. When they were repeatedly turned down for entry visas, the father of a student they had befriended turned out to be the key they needed. He arranged permissions for them to enter for a year!

INTERCESSORS

Ask of Me and I will give you the nations for your inheritance and the ends of the earth for your possession. -Psalm 2:8 NKJV

Prayer Above All

Every one of us must spend time in prayer and intercession, but some are especially called to this ministry. Instead of praying only for individuals you know on the field, how about praying for an unreached people group who has no one to care about them? Many churches are choosing to adopt a particular people group or become advocates for them. By praying specifically for them, researching their culture and history, and networking with others who are interested, they can strategically undergird effective work.

Prayer strategies are multiplying. *Global Prayer Digest* focuses on a different group of unreached peoples in each monthly issue. YWAM produces a 30-day guide to prayer for Muslims during Ramadan, the month the Islamic world fasts. *Operation World* has gathered statistics and prayer guidelines for each nation in the world. Through Wycliffe, prayer teams intercede for Bible-less peoples. The Lydia International Prayer Fellowship has women all over the world praying for specific nations, especially their leaders. Several groups are organizing children to pray, primarily for the unreached.

Start with Repentance

Serious prayer often begins with serious repentance. Southern Baptists in the U.S. have asked African-Americans to forgive them for the abuses received since the time of slavery. Many

groups are asking forgiveness of tribes and minorities in their countries who have been mistreated and despised. At the Global Congress on World Evangelization (GCOWE) in Korea, Arab Christians and Jewish Christians sought each other's forgiveness, Japanese delegates repented before Koreans, and the Orthodox representatives asked the forgiveness of Evangelical believers. Prayer walks retracing the routes of the Crusades request forgiveness from Jews, Muslims, and Orthodox believers for the offenses against them by crusaders.

Through the AD2000 Movement, prayer teams go into countries and cities in the 10/40 window to walk and pray through the very streets where an unreached people lives. By coming to pray, teams do not have to learn a language to make a difference. Children often participate in these prayer walks as well. Not only does this mobilize the sending church to focused prayer, it allows Christians to experience the reality of the needs in a depth no video or story could ever portray.

GOERS

As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.
-John 20:21 NASB

Some people envision a goer only as a dynamic pioneer who is willing to brave any danger to reach his target group. While these types of entrepreneurial leaders are important, they are not the only persons needed on the field. Greg Livingstone, found of Frontiers, believes a variety of gifts are important to make a healthy team. He explains the three major categories that should be included.

Three Different Roles (p 129)

Leaders of the entrepreneurial mold get the team motivated to go the field. Their optimism, enthusiasm,

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and “can-do” spirit keep people moving forward in spite of obstacles. However, after several years in the culture, a new kind of leader is required. This would be one with a combination of pastoral and administrative gifts, who is skilled in managing team relations and keeping them working well together. The entrepreneur may prefer to move on to envision another team.

A second set of gifts are held by those Livingstone calls “the ‘people’ people.” Friend-makers, generous hosts, teachers, evangelists, pastoral disciplers, and prophets calling for purity are all a part of this assemblage. Together they make up the heart of the team, befriending the target people, welcoming them into their homes, challenging them with the claims of Christ, then teaching them to obey all His commands.

Finally, the facilitators are a critical component. These are people with marketable skills or a business project that could gain the team entry. A professor of appropriate technology and international development could not leave home permanently but opened the doors for the team with his expertise and credentials. He returned

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annually to reconnect with the officials and to advise the team on technical matters. Facilitators would also include those gifted to handle the logistical-practical needs of the team so that they can function well in their location for a number of years. In one area, a couple in their sixties serves, running errands, providing hospitality and wise advice for younger team members, and functioning as un-official team “mentors.” One widowed mother joined a team so she could be with her grandchildren, and she proved to be a blessing to nationals and workers alike.

Leaders, people connectors, and facilitators all contribute to team fruitfulness. These varied

kinds of goers often practice their giftedness in welcomer and mobilizer functions before they go to the field. Church planting is the end goal for all these roles, but each team member must learn to assist in their own unique way.

JOINING THE WORLDWIDE TEAM

God holds all Christians accountable to participate in reaching the nations. Your unique contribution will depend on your talents, interests, and life circumstances.

Analyze Your Interests

To test whether sending, mobilizing, welcoming, going, or intercession best utilizes your gifts and abilities, simply try one out. Often, in reality, they overlap and

strengthen one another. What burdens and concerns has the Lord given you? Do you have a heart for certain people, tribes, or countries? Are you interested in urban missions, Bible translation, church planting, or supporting nationals in their own cross-cultural outreach? Do you find an affinity with the vision of a certain agency?

Look for opportunities that have a natural fit with your abilities or interests. This is vital, since the satisfaction you gain from following your God-given inclinations will help motivate you to persist in the face of obstacles. Whether you are a corporate executive, a university professor, a housewife, a barber, or a construction worker, you have skills, experience, and a circle of influence that can extend the Kingdom.

Start Right Where You Are

Service opportunities abound. Find those that complement your gifts. Could you use your accounting or personnel skills to help a mission agency? Could your whole family work together on a mission project? Could you extend an overseas business trip for a day or two to visit your church’s field workers? Could you become the email contact for missionaries your church has sent out?

If you’re called to be a sender, don’t wait to get rich or find a “windfall.” Begin to give, both your time and your finances, and make your giving

sacrificial. Look for fresh opportunities to generate funds. Can you sell something? Is there a service you can offer in your spare time or lessons you might teach? One group scours garage sales for antiques, which are then marketed through an antique dealer in their congregation. The dealer adds her commission to the fund.

Expect to Expand

When your income increases, increase your giving. When your involvement works out well, brings in others. Pray that God will bless you financially, and when it happens, don't forget the purpose for which God gave it. Use your God-given creativity to explore untried options to keep your interests continually lively and stimulating.

Keep Learning

Talk to other Christians who serve effectively in these roles. Ask questions about mission agencies and ministries that interest you. Find friends or fellow church members who are headed for short-term or full-time missions and get involved with them. Spend time with missionaries who visit your church. Choose a country in which you are interested, and specialize in learning its culture, geography, government, economy, history, and present needs and problems. Take the posture of a learner with international friends, asking them to teach you how to cook their food or make their crafts or play their games. And never forget to turn these all into opportunities for more perceptive prayer!

Try Something Radical

Do more than you think you can. Don't be afraid to give all your birthday or graduation money, all the money from an unexpected inheritance, 50 percent from your business, 80 percent from your tax refund. Invite an international to live with your family. Even better, consider moving to an area of your town where they live.

The family of an Episcopian priest blessed a student from a closed Muslim emirate as he lived with them. Upon returning, he advanced in leadership in his own country. He recently gave permission for the first Christian church in history to be constructed there. On the other hand, a

military officer from Ethiopia was the recipient of haughty, prejudicial treatment when he trained in the U.S. He returned to lead a military coup and ruthlessly persecute the church in his home country for many years.

Start small, but don't expect to stay there. Every gift from God **will** grow if it is put to work. Only the buried "talents" remain unchanged and undeveloped (Matthew 25: 14-29). Starting small lets you learn along the way.

Opportunities Available

God holds all Christians accountable to participate in reaching the nations. Your unique contribution will depend on your talents, interests, and life circumstances. Whether you go to the field, enable someone else to go, mobilize the Body of Christ, welcome those God brings to your home territory, or intercede for the nations, you can advance His Kingdom. Limitless opportunities exist to participate globally, from those experiencing tremendous success to costly pioneer works persevering in faith.

Even missionaries can serve in these ways. One couple, working in a very resistant field in France, supported a team in Indonesia because they wanted to have a part in a ministry that was bearing fruit! Another mission couple used their prayer letters to teach and mobilize their team back home.

Each Has a Part

There are no superstars in the Kingdom of God. Those on whom the spotlight shines stand on the shoulders of others who sacrifice, pray, train, love, and give to keep them there. Before he left for the field, C.T. Studd gave away his considerable inheritance; part of that helped General Booth start the Salvation Army. George Mueller, who worked with orphans in England, tithed to Hudson Taylor's ministry in China. We work together as partners in a purpose larger than ourselves.

As we serve, each in our assigned place, we prove the truth of David's age-old insight that every warrior is essential to the battle. Along with those who go to the field, we likewise will be found "called, chosen, and faithful" (Revelation 17:14) as each one develops in their particular

role. As servants to one another in His Kingdom cause, we, too, will swell the ranks of the company of the committed.

END NOTES

Livingstone, Greg. *Planting Churches in Muslim Cities: A team approach*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1993. pp. 101-108.