

DEPENDENCY



Use of Money in Church Planting

SCRIPTURE FOCUS

“We put no obstacle in anyone’s way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, but as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way.” 2 Corinthians 6:3-4

“We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints...With him we are sending the brother who is famous among all the churches for his preaching of the gospel. And not only that, but he has been appointed by the churches to travel with us as we carry out this act of grace that is being ministered by us, for the glory of the Lord himself and to show our good will. We take this course so that no one should blame us about this generous gift that is being administered by us.” 2 Corinthians 8:1-4, 18-20

“Shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly.” 1 Peter 5:2

“Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard without eating any of its fruit? Or who tends a flock without getting some of the milk? Do I say these things on human authority? Does not the Law say the same? For it is written in the Law of Moses, ‘You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain.’ Is it for oxen that God is concerned? Does he not certainly speak for our sake? It was written for our sake, because the plowman should plow in hope and the thresher thresh in hope of sharing in the crop. If we have sown spiritual things among you, is it too much if we reap material things from you? If others share this rightful claim on you, do not we even more?” 1 Corinthians 9:7-12

“...For even when we were with you, we would give you this command: If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat. For we hear that some among you walk in idleness, not busy at work, but busybodies. Now such persons we command and encourage in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living.” 2 Thessalonians 3:10-12

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QUOTES

“The question is not whether we invest in missions but rather where and how we invest to generate lasting results, even after the missionary has left.” Anonymous

“...the dependency syndrome has little to do with wealth or poverty. It has to do with a mentality on the part of both the local people and on the outsiders who try to help.” Glen J. Schwartz

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After completion of this session the learner should be able to:

- Describe the syndrome of dependency and discover its root causes.
- Gain an increased understanding of indigenous mission work and its implications for building reproducing churches.
- Examine motives for mission giving and understand the consequences for indiscriminate and unwise giving.
- Explore strategies for avoiding and breaking the stranglehold of dependency and for promoting healthy self-reliance of indigenous churches.

MONEY AND MISSIONS

The use of money in missions has been described as a two-edged sword that can empower missions on the one hand while hindering or destroying it on the other.

Financial resources can support the efforts of pioneer church planters to carry the gospel to people waiting to hear it for the first time, or it can hinder the efforts of poorer, developing world churches by creating an unhealthy dependency on foreign resources. For example, money can fund platforms for missionaries to meet human needs and do community development projects for building relationships which open doors of opportunity for witness; but on the other hand, witness can be impaired or destroyed if a sense of entitlement takes root in a community or if the provision of goods or ministry is viewed as only a means to propagate a religion.

Money can also create jealousy and corruption. Imagine the envy created when the pastor of a church in West Africa was given a four-wheel drive sport-utility vehicle for evangelistic work when 95% of the Africans in his church could barely afford public transport.

The indigenous pastor of a church experiencing phenomenal growth in Nairobi was asked his views on subsidizing the salaries of Kenyan pastors. His impassioned response was, “If you do, you will cripple us.” He believed Kenya already had enough handicapped mission-established churches.

While we know that in many cases near-culture and indigenous workers can have much

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greater long-term influence, we often struggle to gain a wise perspective on the issue of how our offers to enable and assist others will affect them and the work in the long run.

- Will the ripple effect of our choices be beneficial or harmful?
- Will our offerings to assist enable in a positive way or deflate the spirit and determination of those who receive our assistance?
- How do we know when helping is a good choice and when it is detrimental?

If you Google “indigenous missions” you will come across an abundance of websites for indigenous evangelists and missionaries from Asia to Africa appealing for financial support for their work. They present a fairly convincing argument to North American churches to do missions by proxy. It is especially appealing to churches whose hearts are broken for the lost, but who are intimidated by the sheer cost and expertise necessary to send their own missionaries.

One personal appeal of an Asian evangelist presenting his case to North American churches for support reads, “IT MAKES SENSE – SAVES CENTS – AND IS BIBLICAL!”

He asserts:

- “It was Jesus’ and Paul’s strategy.” (biblical argument)
- Nationals communicate the message more effectively. (contextualization argument)
- Nationals have no or minimal cultural or language barriers to overcome. (practical argument)
- Nationals have a greater access to mission fields. (access argument)
- Nationals remain in their home country for a lifetime. (continuity argument)
- Nationals live simpler and cheaper lifestyles. (economical argument)

REFLECT #1

1. Which of this indigenous Asian evangelist’s arguments do you find most persuasive? Why?
2. Do you agree or disagree with the oblique assertion that it was the strategy of Jesus and Paul to send money to indigenous evangelists to do missions? Support your answer with biblical texts.
3. In the sending money scenario, who decides how money will be used in ministry? How does this affect a sense of ownership of the work? Who is accountable to whom?
4. What could happen if the sponsoring Western church gets new pastoral leadership that wants to focus on building a new sanctuary at home instead of supporting missions?
5. Can people in poor developing countries really financially support the work God is calling them to do? Should they be looking beyond their borders for outside resources?

A CASE STUDY: WHAT’S WRONG WITH THIS PICTURE?

The young missionary was excited about his first full-time role on the mission field. His predecessor had started more than fifty churches in the area. It was obvious “the fields were ripe unto harvest.” Now that tragic circumstances had caused the former missionary to leave the field, the young missionary and his family assumed the position with dreams of a fruitful ministry based from a small village and the surrounding region.

On an early morning during their first week in the area, a knock came at the door. A man in his sixties stood in the early morning light. The young missionary expected the customary

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greetings but was surprised when the old man introduced himself as a pastor and got right to the point: “Reverend, your church is falling down.”

“Excuse me,” replied the young missionary, “did you say that my church is falling down? I have only just arrived. How could I have a church?”

“You are replacing the other missionary, aren’t you? He was good and we loved him so much. He came and preached the gospel to us. Once a group had started meeting together, he provided the money and built a church building for us. We will surely miss him and his family. Since you are replacing him, you should know that the church is falling and needs to be repaired.”

The young missionary needed some time to survey the situation and to pray about a solution. On the way to the damaged building, the young missionary passed several other buildings his predecessor had built. None were ostentatious. They were made of locally obtainable materials. The buildings were made of mud block coated with cement. Some roofs were made of thatch, but the damaged building had a tin roof. “Reverend, the materials to put in a tin roof are really expensive, and we are just poor people. We need you to replace the roof,” said the indigenous pastor.

*REVEREND, YOUR CHURCH IS
FALLING DOWN.*

The young missionary was concerned that the pastor and the church members did not seem to feel any sense of ownership in the church building. They, therefore, felt no responsibility for making any repairs. He was also concerned

about the dependency that was evident in the situation. He knew he had no funds to make the repairs even if he felt it was the right thing to do.

The older pastor was very skeptical when he heard that the young missionary had no funds for church building repairs. “The other missionary would have bought the tin to repair our roof with money from the mission. They provide the big house you live in. I know you don’t want to spend the money just on yourself. You know what the Bible says about helping fellow Christians who are in need.”

The young missionary worked hard for several years to encourage local people to move away from dependency. He encouraged them to pay their own leaders, build their own buildings and manage their own affairs. As a result, a few younger pastors and church leaders began preaching about tithing and the importance of the church depending on God to do the work of God. They began to expand their vision of evangelizing areas that had not yet been reached with the gospel.

Then, along came a group of “partnership” people from America who offered to pay salaries for all pastors and to ship containers of used clothing for members of each church in the area. Based on these promises, many of the churches moved back toward unhealthy dependency, changed their affiliation, and joined this new group.

The younger pastors felt this “sheep stealing” was wrong, but in the end, succumbed to pressures of family and church members to join the new group. When a church changed their affiliation to become a part of this new group, the “partnership people” in America reported

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it as a new church start. When members of sponsoring churches in America heard of the extreme poverty of these African brothers and of the impressive progress they were making in starting many new churches, they wanted to give generously to meet physical needs and further speed up the work. These donors, however, became disappointed when fewer and fewer new church starts were reported in succeeding years.

To keep donations flowing in, African leaders were encouraged to report work in villages where they had future plans to visit as though they were already new preaching points. African leaders understood the web of deception being spun to raise funds. They did not like it but felt they had no choice but to go along with the deception because they had come to depend on salary subsidies to support their families and send their children to school. New people who had joined the church when free food and clothing were being passed out began to expect “perks” for being a church member. Church leaders feared the problems that would come if these expectations were not met.

REFLECT #2

1. In this case study, what expectations did African church members have for the newly arriving missionary? Why did they have these kinds of expectations?

2. Why do you think the older pastor felt that church repairs were the responsibility of the new missionary?

3. How would you describe the spiritual maturity of the church members in this case study?

They expressed their Christian faith at

- _ a deep level
- _ a superficial level

They held Christian values and beliefs

- _ Lightly, laying aside Christian values for economic reasons
- _ Strongly, not giving in to social and financial pressures

Their spiritual transformation appeared to be

- _ Deep (Christian life worth sacrificing for, causing them to forsake former ways of life.)
- _ Shallow and superficial (overlying their Christian worldview with their traditional worldview.)

Their traditional worldview

- _ Was their primary source of decision-making in times of stress and uncertainty
- _ Was their secondary source of decision-making after they tried to resolve their problem through prayer and unified decision-making in the church

Through their actions, they appeared to say

- _ “God has called us, and we know that he will provide for us.”
- _ “We are poor, and that’s just the way it is and will always be.”

They appeared to believe that

- _ God deserves a tenth of their income.
- _ God cannot expect them to give much because they will not have anything to live on if they do.

Their life choice seemed to revolve around

- _ Convenience, greed, and self-preservation
- _ Bringing glory to God, listening and obeying the Holy Spirit

They are

- _ Focused on sharing their faith and discipling those they lead to Christ
- _ Not likely to be reproduced elsewhere

4. What dilemma did African church leaders face to keep support coming at a level at which they had become accustomed?

5. How do you think the salary subsidy changed the relationship between the indigenous pastor and his members? Between the young pastors and the lost people in the community?

THE SYNDROME OF DEPENDENCY: A UNIVERSAL SCENARIO

Due to colonial mission methodologies, many churches in the developing world have been

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modeled after or profoundly influenced by western models of church. This often puts the indigenous church in the difficult position of needing more resources than can be generated locally to imitate and maintain the prosperous and successful ways of “doing church” in the West.

On the one hand, churches in the developing world admire and envy the wealth and resources of western churches that implement a myriad of programs and possess extravagant facilities. On the other hand, they resent having to beg continually for “handouts” from foreign donors to maintain their programs and buildings. The new church assumes they cannot exist and function without outside funding. They come to view themselves as receiving churches. Some have come to believe that what they must give is so insignificant that it is not worth giving to God.

Receiving churches become so paralyzed without subsidy, they are unable to pay their pastors, maintain their buildings or reproduce themselves. They feel they cannot afford any missionary outreach or evangelism of their own. They look to outsiders or foreigners to fund even their most basic needs. Often these churches develop a dependency syndrome believing they are too poor to do anything themselves and will always have to depend on outsiders. This is not only true in third world nations – but is also prevalent in many prosperous nations where the expatriate missionary has been the leader or pastor instead of developing indigenous leadership. Since they have never been self-reliant, they have simply resigned themselves to the reality that it will always be this way.

Through years of dependency, their resentment grows toward overseas donors who have taken their dignity by treating them as stepchildren who must be instructed and monitored carefully. They can hardly disguise their disdain as they submit mandatory reports and regular audits in order to receive funds. Indigenous churches often view the restrictions placed on the use of funds stipulated by partnership agreements as veiled cover-ups for the lack of trust their partners have in them. Since their partners have made little effort to understand their culture, such restrictions make no sense, are often counterproductive, and bear little lasting fruit. The indigenous churches, however, have to hide their true feelings and constantly flatter their donors to keep the money flowing.

*THE DEPENDENCY SYNDROME IS A
DOWNWARD SPIRAL OF MUTUAL
SUSPICION, RESENTMENT,
UNRESOLVED ISSUES, AND MISTRUST.*

Conversely, sponsoring churches, after faithfully supporting the work for years, become discouraged and fatigued at the lack of progress in these baby mission churches that seem to expect them to do everything for them yet show little gratitude for the sacrifices they make to support them. They understand that their

“poor” brothers will never have adequate resources to do the work “properly” but wonder if they could begin to gradually take on more responsibility for supporting the work.

The dependency syndrome is a downward spiral of mutual suspicion, resentment, unresolved issues, and mistrust. That downward spiral often ends up in seemingly endless partnership meetings in an attempt to resolve issues. The focus is often on preserving the cohesiveness of the group while the missionary vision to reach those waiting to hear the gospel diminishes or even dies.

REFLECT #3

1. How do you think receiving churches see themselves? How does this contribute to the dependency syndrome? Do you think the dependency syndrome has more to do with mentality or with wealth and poverty?
2. How do sponsoring churches see the receiving church? How does this contribute to the dependency syndrome?
3. What do you think are some of the underlying causes creating dependency?
4. Can receiving churches eventually come to resent their sponsoring churches? Why?
5. Should subsidies be given to local indigenous churches? If so, to what extent should they be subsidized? Should any restrictions be attached? Should they be held accountable for funds? How?
6. What can result from receiving churches and sponsoring churches stuck in the dependency syndrome?

THE IMPORTANCE OF STARTING RIGHT: THE INDIGENOUS CHURCH

We live in a world where population has exploded beyond six billion people and continues growing exponentially. There is an increasing number of governments restricting gospel witness by denying access to evangelical missionaries, and there is a growing hostility toward Western Christian culture. Because of this, foreigners or “outsiders” will have diminishing opportunity to spread the gospel directly. Congregations of local believers, or “insiders” in the community who live out an authentic cultural expression of Christianity in their society have the greatest influence in navigating a movement of God among their people. Some missiologists believe that many mission-established churches have been born handicapped and do not reproduce due to the methods used by Westerners over the past century. Effective cross-cultural church planters intentionally seek to plant an indigenous church that naturally reproduces itself, creating a movement of “insider” churches planting churches.

The Indigenous Church Model

Indigenous means “having originated in and being produced, growing, living or occurring naturally in a particular region or environment.” An indigenous church, then, is suited to the local culture since it reflects naturally the context and environment in which it is planted. It has the ability to grow and reproduce without special care or outside resources to sustain it.

AN INDIGENOUS CHURCH, THEN, IS SUITED TO THE LOCAL CULTURE SINCE IT REFLECTS NATURALLY THE CONTEXT AND ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH IT IS PLANTED.

John Nevius, a Presbyterian missionary to China and Korea in the late 1800s, became disillusioned with what he saw as a flawed paternalistic model of missions, whereby missionaries made national believers completely dependent on them by giving them free food or employing them as servants. Under this system, missionaries resisted giving up authority and control to local believers whom they considered too immature to take leadership in the church. Nevius developed principles in building self-supporting, self-propagating, and self-governing congregations from the start. In this paradigm, local Christians would not be extracted from their environment but would continue living, working, witnessing, and supporting themselves in their community. They would call out and support their own pastors, developing ministries they viewed as needed and in a manner they could sustain without the assistance of others. Church buildings were to be constructed with funds and local materials given by their own church members. The role of the cross-cultural church planter or foreign missionary was generally seen as building a framework or scaffolding for

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new churches through discipleship and leadership training. Once the fellowship of local believers was functioning, the scaffolding was to be removed, phasing out the missionary.

Historically, the church has thrived and reproduced itself when ordinary believers (church members), filled with the Holy Spirit and God's vision, planted churches without big finances or elegant buildings.

Who owns the church? Is a church truly indigenous or is it not? **A church is not indigenous when:**

- Believers overlay indigenous expressions of their Christian worldview with traditions of another worldview that are not prescribed in scripture.
- Local believers borrow foreign language, church structure, doctrines, music, worship styles, theology, and even faith experiences that are not relevant to their culture or society.
- Local believers are not truly free to make decisions about their future without consulting some foreign sponsoring agency.
- Worshipers do not have a sense that they are truly worshipping God because their expressions of worship are expressions forced on them by an outside source.
- Structures inherited from outsiders cannot be supported by local resources.
- Local congregations have no sense of ownership and do not believe that they have a voice in decision-making.
- Places of worship are built by foreign people with foreign money.
- Things that are morally neutral, such as indigenous musical instruments, are not permitted because outsiders consider their use unspiritual or unorthodox.
- A vision for missionary outreach is not born in the hearts and minds of local people

REFLECT #4

What makes a church "indigenous"?

CASE STUDY: CAUSES OF DEPENDENCY

A church in Texas has been sending three or four mission teams each year for more than three decades to help impoverished churches in a developing country where the average annual income is less than \$900. The Texas church builds or repairs their buildings, conducts Vacation Bible Schools and backyard Bible clubs, provides medical services, preaches revivals and do many of the things they do back home in Texas.

The poverty and sacrifice of the developing church members are always such a stark contrast to the comfortable level of living in Texas. It moves the visiting group to leave monetary gifts to help their Christian brothers and sisters survive. Many Texas team members send funds back regularly to fund children's school expenses and provide food aid. On one trip, the team from Texas joined in a worship service at a new mission point. When the offering was taken, all team members gave generously to help the church get started.

REFLECT #5

1. What unintentional message do you think members of the “impoverished churches” received from the Texas mission teams who returned year after year to do for them the things they were doing?
2. How might this affect the self-image of the receiving church?
 Check off the motives you think the Texas church had in faithfully returning year after year to minister:
 - A desire to alleviate the suffering of poverty by improving economic conditions.
 - A desire to correct injustice of global economic inequities.
 - A sense of guilt.
 - A misguided assumption that the local people are too helpless and have too little resources to do anything for themselves.
 - A desire to do something significant.
 - A desire to satisfy an inward need to be needed.

A desire to alleviate the suffering of poverty. In developing countries, poverty is visible and all-encompassing. The first-time visitor is enveloped in graphic scenes of cardboard shanties, open sewers, naked malnourished toddlers, and the horrible stench of rotting garbage. Compassion is a natural Christian response to such appalling conditions.

A desire to correct injustice. Eager to solve global problems with American money and technology, donors plunge in with solutions before they understand the local situations, and forge financial relationships with people they scarcely know.

A sense of guilt. Visible poverty can create a compassionate reaction that combines with a sense of guilt for having so much while other Christians have so little. This, in turn, can cause rash decisions that produce dependency. This may be done through actual donation of money or materials, or simply through making promises that are soon forgotten when the scenes of poverty have faded from memory. Professional beggars and even local believers are perceptive at recognizing westerners who operate out of sense of guilt and can use that guilt to persuade them to give unwisely.

A misguided assumption that the local people are too helpless. Unfortunately, this assumption often results in a policy of benevolent paternalism. To take care of their less fortunate brothers, some generate development projects, pay foreign workers to do work that locals could do, or purchase “quality” imported building materials without testing the suitability of local materials.

Throughout the process, the benevolent patron rarely invites the involvement or consultation of the receiving community, all the while believing they are doing what is best for these impoverished people. When the local community does not take full advantage of the facilities they have worked so hard to provide, they are completely baffled by their indifference and ingratitude.

A desire to do something significant. Not only do we as Westerners desire to do something significant, but we also prefer that what we accomplish is something visible, measurable and that it may be accomplished in a short period of time. Seeking a “quick fix,” American Christians link up with local Christians to “fix up” their buildings, do their evangelism, preach in their services, lead Vacation Bible Schools—all things local church members are better equipped to do because they are cultural insiders.

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Sadly, however, local church members may think their own efforts are inferior in comparison to the well-funded foreign campaigns, which causes them to lose their initiative. Some become corrupt, seeking an inside track to foreign groups and the resources they bring. The local church may abandon its indigenous efforts and become resigned to living off foreign support.

A desire to satisfy an inward need to be needed. When local people in crisis come to them with their problems, they receive gratification by responding personally to those needs. Oftentimes, a pattern develops: as the donor is successfully able to help the local in his or her crisis, the local then invents more and more crisis in order to request more and more monetary help. All the while, the giver feels good because he or she is needed to rescue others from certain disaster.

REFLECT #6

1. What problems could the Texas mission team have created for the receiving church by unwise and indiscriminate giving?
2. Check below all the possible results created by unwise giving:
 - _ Overly influence the direction of the local ministry by attaching conditions to their gifts such as designating or restricting funds to specific uses.
 - _ Create the impression in the minds of local believers that they will never be able to support the ministry completely as it should be done, producing perpetual receivers.
 - _ Rob local believers of their dignity and fulfillment of doing ministry in a way that they feel meets the needs of their community.
 - _ Develop projects and programs that cannot be sustained or reproduced by those they are trying to help.
 - _ Become perceived as dominating and controlling by the churches they are serving.
 - _ Cause the local congregation to look to outsiders for resources instead of depending on God.
 - _ Destroy the initiative and sense of ownership of local believers to meet their God-given responsibilities and opportunities.
 - _ Reinforce the idea that local believers have nothing worth giving back to God.
 - _ Tempt local church leaders and believers to compromise their convictions in order to gain financial and/or material benefits.
 - _ Cause the church to abandon its indigenous efforts and depend on foreign support.
 - _ People may become more interested in the things that come with the gospel than the gospel itself.
3. Which ones of these well-meaning intentions speak directly to you? Why?

CASE STUDY: AVOIDING DEPENDENCY

A cross-cultural church planter moved his family into the second most populated city in a developing country. This was his second church planting assignment so he was well acquainted with the problems of creating dependency. He and his wife began to get a burden for young adults in the city who were not responding to traditional church planting strategies. Knowing the importance of prayer, he began to pray for God to open doors of opportunity. After some time, the church planter received a visitor. The visitor, recently released from prison where he was converted, was eagerly looking for Christian fellowship and hungry to grow in his newly found faith. The church planter began discipling him and teaching him the importance of sharing his faith.

Within a couple of weeks, he led five of his friends to faith in Christ. The church planter encouraged him to teach the things he had been learning to these new disciples. Within a month, thirty young men were huddled together studying the word of God in a small rented bedroom without electricity or running water. The group moved to a small reading room in a bookstore that was closed on Sundays and grew to a congregation of more than two hundred

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in their first year. This new congregation of young people began to take up weekly offerings, praying for God to provide them with a larger place to meet. When they heard that a piece of property was going to be put up for sale in their area, they prayed and sent a small delegation with their meager offering to try to purchase the land. When asked by the seller why they wanted his land, they were able to witness to the seller who then offered to give them the land. The church greatly rejoiced at the provision of God to meet their need.

They then purchased cement with the money and mixed the mortar by hand to make the blocks. That same year, God called 15 young men out of that congregation into the gospel ministry. They joyfully began meeting in the new building that God had provided before it had any benches, electricity, ceiling, or interior walls.

Before the building was completed, a rebel army attacked the city forcing church members to flee into the bush for safety. The missionary was evacuated from the country. In the midst of a twenty-year civil war, without any outside support or foreign leadership, the congregation started three more churches.

REFLECT #7

1. How would you describe the sense of this church had in its ministries?
2. What do you think the church building symbolized to the congregation? Why was this important for future growth?
3. The city in which this church was planted has a history of mission organizations building churches, paying rent, and subsidizing pastors' salaries. Why do think members of the new church never requested the missionary church planter to aid them in buying their land, building a church structure, or paying any of their leaders?
4. What do you view as signs of health in this church?

This case study points to the importance of starting out right by applying indigenous principles from the beginning. Unfortunately, this is not always possible.

If mission-established churches already exist in the target area, local people may be infected with the mindset that the missionary is supposed to give and the people are supposed to receive. In cases where a cross-cultural church planter inherits a dependency-ridden situation started by someone else, it will take time and patience, as well as a lot of relationship building and teaching, to earn the trust necessary for helping local believers break out of the stranglehold of dependence in areas where it exists. It also requires vigilance to guard against sliding back into a cycle of comfortable but damaging co-dependent relationships.

Here are a few suggestions for the journey:

- Pray for God to intervene in the lives of leaders of dependent churches to change their hearts and attitudes.
- Help dependent congregations identify root causes of their dependency; for example, a lack of spiritual maturity or a fatalistic victim mentality.
- Look to local believers for creative ways to transition from dependency to self-reliance and sustainability.
- Reduce the economic distance between missionaries and dependent churches by missionaries living a simple lifestyle, eating foods purchased in local markets, wearing local clothing, walking and/or using public transport for daily activities, furnishing their homes with locally made furniture, etc.

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- Model dependence on God, by turning to God to meet personal and ministry needs, to solve problems, and to resolve relationship issues, so dependence-ridden church members can develop a pattern of looking to God first.
- Model, teach, and help new converts develop a plan to experience the joy of practicing principles of Christian stewardship as the norm for Christian living.
- Assist dependent churches and communities in identifying resources that are close at hand; for example, the extended family network, land, labor, materials, etc.
- Challenge dependent churches to redirect their ministry focus to unreached peoples.
- Do nothing for local believers that they can do for themselves.
- Do not establish program or embark on any project that the local church or community cannot sustain without outside resources.
- Learn how to politely say no to unhealthy requests for help.
- Decline offers of positions of power and authority.

REFLECT #8

1. How do you typically respond to needs of churches in developing countries?
2. How do you want the churches you will plant to perceive themselves?
3. List five personal principles you would apply before using money in doing missions?
4. What advice would you give a sponsoring church or missionary who wanted to financially support an indigenous church and its leaders?

SUMMARY

Dependency issues in cross-cultural ministry are unfortunately a reality. Whether there is a temptation toward financial dependency, emotional dependency, or leadership dependency, a gospel movement can be ignited or squelched depending on how well the cross-cultural worker manages issues of dependency. For this reason, attuning to the Holy Spirit is crucial as the witness enters the second culture.

Establishing healthy ways of resourcing a church planting movement often means the cross-cultural worker must examine his/her own motives, make decisions that are counter to their instincts, and be willing to endure the expressed disappointment or rejection they may receive when they do not give others what they think they need. It also requires spiritual finesse. Hard lines and fast rules that do not consider the uniqueness of any given circumstance can lead to severed relationships. There must be a willingness to help the indigenous church consider creative ways to resource their own needs that are rooted in authentic and sacrificial love on the part of the worker. To simply say “no” without helping others consider their options is a form of self-preservation.

To live like Christ, we must continue to be moved by compassion and be attentive to needs – even when we cannot give someone exactly what they want. To work with others toward an indigenous solution is a challenging but rewarding process that will ultimately yield health and sustainability.

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Imagine

- What would a truly indigenous worship experience look like among your target population?
- What would it be like to be part of a church planting effort in which you were not recognized as the “visible” leader? Are you willing to obey the call to church planting in this scenario?
- Imagine you have a friend who is serving as a cross-cultural church planter. What are ten questions he or she should ask when considering whether or not to give financial aid to their community?

Lifestyle

- Examine your current relationships. In what ways do you create unhealthy dependencies? How do these actions on your part affect the lives of others?
- Who are you dependent upon? Does this dependency lead you to self-reliance or do you have a sense of “entitlement” that might cause you to feel hurt by that person if they do not provide you with what you seek from them?
- What will you need to sacrifice in order to live a lifestyle compatible with the local culture in which you will be serving? How will you begin to live this lifestyle now in preparation for your mission?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR *DEPENDENCY*

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A comprehensive analysis of the dependency syndrome with principles for helping churches break out of dependency on outside resources.

AUTHOR

For more than 37 years, **Ron Hill** and his wife, Sharon, have ministered to many diverse

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communities of Muslims and Animistic peoples in West Africa as a church planter, a regional strategy facilitator among 197 unreached people groups and a missions partnership connector.

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