

PARTNERSHIP



Partnership in Mission

SCRIPTURE FOCUS

I pray “that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.” John 17:21-23



QUOTES

“Want to travel fast, travel alone. Want to travel far, travel together.” African Proverb

“The last frontier of missions is collaboration.” Bill O’Brien



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

As a result of the readings, discussion and activities in this lesson, the candidate should be able to understand and apply these truths:

- Partnership is a key part of God’s desire for us
- We are to be God’s partner in service
- We need to partner with others in the Body of Christ to be effective
- Partnership is complex and challenging, particularly cross-culturally



GOD IS A PARTNERING GOD

We know that there is only one God.

“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.” Deuteronomy 6:4

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“For there is one God.” 1 Timothy 2:5

Yet we also know that God is Three-in-One:

Father, Son, Spirit. Even in the beginning, God says,

“Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.” Genesis 1:26

“Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil.” Genesis 3:22

John 17 shows us that God desires us to work in unity. God wants us to be one, just as He is one. This is not uniformity because the roles of the Trinity are different, just as our gifting and callings are different. But it is a unity of Love.

John 17 also shows us that if we as Christ’s disciples are one with each other and one in God, this is so that the world will believe in Jesus. By the same token, if we do all the “right” things and have the most “amazing” ministries, but we are divided and unloving toward each other, then the world will not believe.

“If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.” 1 Corinthians 13:1-3

Jesus tells us in John 17 that God’s glory is manifested in the unity of God and this glory is given to us through that unity. In essence, our message is not an abstract set of “spiritual laws” **BUT we are the message.** If we live in unity and love, then the world will know and believe in the God who loves us.

REFLECT #1

1. What does Romans 12:1-8 teach us about partnering?
2. How do we need to be transformed?
3. How does our thinking need to be transformed?
4. How do the gifts work together?

CASE STUDY: PARTNERING THE WRONG WAY AND RIGHT WAY

The Wrong Way to Help

An influential group within the HR Church was excited. They effectively mobilized their church to pray for unreached people groups. All of the church’s cell groups were praying. This excitement emboldened them for a bigger challenge. They thought God had led them to adopt the Dyvalia Arabs. They committed themselves to pray, give and go until there was a viable church for this unreached people group.

They sent a prayer journey team to the country of Ilahi during the summer. This trip did not turn out as well as they would have hoped. Their intention was to go and pray through the streets of the capital city of Makeval. Unfortunately, due to some visa irregularities, a stubborn Arab Airlines agent in London would not let them on the plane. Two team members found an Arab neighborhood in London and spent two weeks prayer walking. The other five team members toured Great Britain as they awaited their return flight.

When the Smiths, tentmakers in Makeval, found out about this group from HR Church, they were terrified. What if they had made their way into Makeval? What if they bumped into the Smiths or found out about them in some other way? What if some of the team members ended up in a local prison? The Smiths breathed a sigh of relief when they heard that the prayer team did not make it into the country.

In September, the HR Church voted to adopt the Dyvalia Arabs. A Home Team and a Go Team were established. The Go Team would find a way to get into Ilahi and plant a viable, indigenous church. Another purpose of the Home Team was to find out about all the work that did or could relate to the Dyvalia Arabs. As they found out about ministries that could be influenced to focus on the Dyvalia Arabs, they began supporting them financially. Trans World Radio received \$20,000 to increase their Arab language broadcast into the Dyvalia Arab region.

During their investigation, an HR Church Home Team researcher uncovered information about the Smiths. She found that the Smiths were actually geographically close to some Dyvalia Arabs and she immediately began to try to establish contact with them. Unfortunately, the researcher included much sensitive information in the letter she sent to the Smiths. This letter was intercepted by the national authorities and resulted in an extended interrogation of Mr. Smith at the local police headquarters in November.

When news reached the HR Church leadership that their initiative had caused so much difficulty for one of the few Christian witnesses in the Dyvalia area, they became depressed. Currently, all momentum in the initiative is lost and all the members of HR Church are trying to get back to ministry as usual.

The Right Way to Help¹

An influential group within the HR Church was excited. They effectively mobilized their church to pray for unreached people groups. God lead them to adopt the Dyvalia Arabs.

Their first step was to contact Joseph Wallace, the key contact of the Selaman Arab People Cluster. They had found Joe through the database www.synergycommons.net. Joe was very helpful in briefing the leaders about the status of the Church in the Dyvalia area and the sensitivities of ministering in the Arab world. Joe also gave the church specific ideas about ways they could immediately make a difference for the Dyvalia Arabs. He connected them with Trans World Radio and other ministries. Trans World Radio received a check for \$20,000 to expand their Arab language broadcast into the Dyvalia Arab region.

Joe introduced HR Church to Michael Baker of Frontiers when he learned of the church's desire to send a prayer journey team to the Dyvalia area during the summer. With Michael's help, the team was able to spend 5 days praying in Makeval.

When the Smiths, tentmakers in Makeval and friends of Joseph Wallace, were introduced to this group from HR Church, they were cheered. They were encouraged by the church's commitment to prayer. What a difference it would make in the spiritual realm to have an entire church investing itself in praying for the Dyvalia Arabs. They were also encouraged by the other ways this congregation could contribute. Even though the Smiths did not have much contact with Dyvalia Arabs, they were delighted to have more Christian workers in the country. They committed themselves to help a church planting team get established in the

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Dyvalia region. In September, the HR Church voted to adopt the Dyvalia Arabs and a Home Team and a Go Team were established.

During her investigation, an HR Church Home Team researcher, Susan Toll, uncovered information about opportunities for the Go Team. She found that the congregation included some professional people who had skills that could meet felt needs of the Dyvalia Arabs. She found that it should not be that difficult for a family or two to go and work full-time. She regularly consulted with Joseph while maintaining security.

Joseph also introduced the HR Church to a church in Singapore who is interested in the Dyvalia Arabs. This church became interested in Ilahi when one of their families began developing a relationship with an Ilahin diplomatic family who are Dyvalia Arabs. Both churches are excited as they realize their complementary strengths could be used to further God's kingdom among this unreached people group. After observing how this relationship is developing, Joseph agreed to call a Dyvalia Arab Consultation where members of these two churches and representatives from three agencies who have interest in working in Ilahi can come together to pray and find opportunities for strategic partnership.

When news reached the HR Church leadership that their initiative was making a difference in Ilahi, they were all the more encouraged. They continued to bring their adopted responsibility before the church. Currently, momentum continues to build and several groups within HR Church are meeting to pray and plan to the end of seeing the Church planted among the Dyvalia Arab people.

A CHANGING WORLD

We live in a time of an unprecedented global Christian movement. While the church has declined in the West, it has exploded in growth in Africa, Latin America, and Asia. In 1900, 90% of the world's Christians lived in the USA, Canada, and Europe. By 1990 that figure was 38% and fell to 31% by the year 2000. Further, as of 2000, 77% of Evangelicals live outside the USA, Canada, and Europe. (*Operation World* by Patrick Johnstone)

As the formerly dominant group in Christianity, Europeans, and Americans need to realize the world has changed. Unfortunately, some believers outside the Europe and the USA also need to quit being dependent followers of these foreign forms of Christianity. One important task is to identify wrong assumptions and thus changing thoughts and actions.

Identifying Wrong Assumptions for the "Average" Anglo-American Church

1. *Americans are the "drivers" in world Christianity.* In truth, Christianity is no longer primarily American and European in nature and world Christianity is increasingly being led by South Americans, Africans, and Asians.

2. *Anglo-American Christianity has succeeded culturally and their intertwined forms of culture and Christianity are the best model in the world so others should follow their leading.* Actually, much of Anglo-American Christianity contains syncretism with materialism and triumphalism (and other "isms") which has created a weak church which needs to learn from other dynamic movements around the world.

3. *There is no longer a role for the American Christian in world missions (other than perhaps funding).* This is not true, but Westerners need to adjust their individual and corporate roles in light of changing situations.

Identifying Wrong Assumptions for most of us as Christians

1. *We can define what Christianity “is”.* Instead, we need to emphasize that God’s mosaic of faith has tremendous diversity. We are often guilty of reducing the gospel to some key themes that are important to us while overlooking other important Biblical principles and commands that are given priority in other parts of the global Body of Christ.

2. *It is about us and mine (people like me).* We need to avoid focusing so much on people like us as well as on our results and accomplishments and focus more on Christ and His Body and His priorities.

3. *The Golden Rule – “He who has the gold makes the rules.”* Unfortunately, the use of money to manipulate and control, as well as sincere gifts, can lead to dependency and cause some of the greatest damage to the advance of the kingdom worldwide.

4. *Another wrong assumption is the over-generalizing we all fall into such as “all American Christians are...” or “the Church in the southern hemisphere is always...”* (please forgive me for my generalizations above!) The truth is that churches everywhere have troubles and triumphs. While there are some tendencies that we can point out, we need to avoid glossing over very complex situations with trite generalizations.

5. *Missions is primarily about geography.* In fact, the world is in tremendous flux; many Christians around the world can have significant impact on the nations merely by reaching their citizens who have moved in next door. This also involves the false battle between those who argue there is too much need “at home” to go do work in other places and those who argue that only the work in other places is truly worthy.

6. *Missions is solely evangelism and church planting.* We must view people as whole beings and not just practice “filet-of-soul” evangelism that ignores the whole person and their whole life. Likewise, we must plant churches that are transforming individual lives and transforming their communities. We must avoid the false separation between the sacred and the secular – God’s view is holistic and integrated.

7. *We can make disciples without being disciples.* This often ties into our common fallacy that discipleship is a study process designed to increase knowledge rather than a faith process focused primarily on obedience.

REFLECT #2

1. What are ways your beliefs and actions are more cultural than Biblical?
2. If you are a Westerner, how can you learn and serve others from the Global Body of Christ?
3. If you are not a Westerner, how has Western Christianity influenced you and your church?
4. What wrong assumptions do you have?

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THE PARTNERSHIP CONTINUUM²

Review the Partnership model below and prepare to discuss it with your group.

Connecting	Cooperation	Coordination	Collaboration
<i>Low-Intensity</i>	<i>Mild Intensity</i>	<i>Medium Intensity</i>	<i>High Intensity</i>
Some vision to work together	Some project involvement	Commitment to joint projects	High commitment of time, funds, and people
Introductory relationships	Informal relationships	Formal relationships	Deeper relationships; trust high
Information sharing	Joins in with general effort	Collective planning of joint projects	Comprehensive planning of projects
No commitment, risk or structure	Low commitment and risk / little structure	Medium risk and commitment and structure	High commitment and structure
No joint decision-making	No joint decision-making, but increasing consensus	Joint decision-making – but decisions not be binding on partners	Clearly understood process for joint decision-making
Resources are kept separate	Resources are kept separate	Limited resources are available to or shared by partners	Partners pool or jointly secure resources
Power and control not an issue	Power and control unlikely to be an issue	Power and control can be an issue	Power and control can be an issue; sometimes power can be unequal

REFLECT #3

1. How have you and/or your church been involved in a partnership?
2. Where do these partnerships fall on the Partnership model?
3. What are various advantages of each of the 4 levels of partnership?
4. What are various disadvantages of each of the 4 levels of partnership?

THE WORDS OF PARTNERSHIP³

- *Start-nership* – The initial launch of a collaborative effort
- *Partner-slip* – Someone takes an initial step toward possible partnering, but then falters
- *Partner-whip* – A time of frenzied partnering activity
- *Partner-ship* – Buying people off
- *Partner-hip* – Someone who thinks partnering is just a fad
- *Partner-flip* – Support partnering, then not
- *Partner-sip* – The “toe in the water” approach. No real commitment to partner
- *Partner-VIP* – When CEOs of big ministries/churches decide to partner
- *Partner-dip* – When the partnering initiative hits a lull
- *Partner-zip* – Gaining the ability to fast track or shortcut partnering
- *Partner-equip* – The training of how to do partnering
- *Partner-tip* – Providing on-going coaching advice on partnering

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EXPLORE

In order to better understand Great Commission Partnering read all of these online articles:

Toward a Theology of Mission Partnerships (<http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/009182960102900102>)

16 Key Partnership Principles (<http://www.missionfrontiers.org/issue/article/strategic-partnerships-sixteen-key-effectiveness-principles>)

Now access this site to see how God is using partnerships around the world and explore various partnerships and possibilities:

Ethne – Global Network for the Unreached (<http://www.ethne.net/>)

BIBLICAL EXAMPLE: BARNABUS

From the very first time we hear of him, Barnabas was an encourager and a servant of others. The fact that he was from the tribe of Levi means he could have tried to claim special privileges since he was from the priestly tribe, but we never see any evidence of this.

Acts 4:36-37 – “Thus Joseph, who was also called by the apostles Barnabas (which means son of encouragement), a Levite, a native of Cyprus, sold a field that belonged to him and brought the money and laid it at the apostles’ feet.”

The next time we see him, Barnabas is the only one brave enough to take a chance on meeting with the former persecutor of the church. The others were not being unreasonable. In fact, today we see this very same problem with seekers in fanatic Muslim, communist, and Hindu areas in particular.

Acts 9:26-30 – “And when he had come to Jerusalem, he attempted to join the disciples. And they were all afraid of him, for they did not believe that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles and declared to them how on the road he had seen the Lord, who spoke to him, and how at Damascus he had preached boldly in the name of Jesus. So he went in and out among them at Jerusalem, preaching boldly in the name of the Lord. And he spoke and disputed against the Hellenists. But they were seeking to kill him. And when the brothers learned this, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him off to Tarsus.”

Remember that the early church was still very ethnocentric. Despite the power of the Holy Spirit, they still had to appoint deacons to smooth over prejudices and accusations between Greek-speaking and Hebrew-speaking believers. In this type of environment, they suddenly hear of God’s miraculous acts in Antioch.

Acts 11:22-24 – “The report of this came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. When he came and saw the grace of God, he was glad, and he exhorted them all to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose, for he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord.”

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Barnabas is once again a bridge-builder and encourager. He does not glory in successful ministry with many people being brought to the Lord. He's led by God.

Acts 11:25-26 – “So Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. For a whole year they met with the church and taught a great many people. And in Antioch the disciples were first called Christians.”

What would have happened if Barnabas had not been an encourager and a partner who saw the best in people? God would have still accomplished His purposes – but just imagine the early church without Paul!

Acts 13:1-4 – “Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a lifelong friend of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off. So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus.”

Here we see the early church pattern of multiple leaders with multiple giftings. We also see the willingness of a church to release 40% of their top leaders to the world. These first missionaries were sent out by the Holy Spirit – the church released them to God's calling rather than holding them for their own benefit.

Later in Acts 13, we see the shift from saying Barnabas and Paul, to saying Paul and Barnabas. The culture of that day tended to state the name of the more prominent person first. We see no sign of Barnabas resenting this change. He went from being the most prominent leader in the Antioch church to following Paul's leadership on their missionary journey.

In Acts 15:37-39 we see Paul and Barnabas disagree about John Mark. As they are going to take a second journey, Barnabas wants to take John Mark with them – but Paul opposes this suggestion, due to John Mark previously deserting them. But Barnabas gives John Mark a second chance and we later see him author a gospel as well as become a dear colleague to Paul himself.

Galatians 2:11-13 – “But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. For before certain men came from James, he was eating with the Gentiles; but when they came he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party. And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy.”

Although Barnabas was a great servant and partner of God and humanity, he showed that even a man like him can make mistakes and be lead astray. We can be comforted by the reality of the Biblical heroes who have their “feet of clay.” And we can be reminded to be diligent and remember that past obedience is no guarantee of present or future obedience. Although the Bible does not state it, I would imagine that Barnabas repented and apologized profusely.

REFLECT #4

What do the following images of the church tell us about partnership?

1. Body of Christ: Ephesians 1:15-23 / Romans 12:3-8 / 1 Corinthians 12:12-31
2. Bride of Christ: Ephesians 5:22-32

3. God's Household: *1 Timothy 3:14-15*
4. Pillar and Foundation of the Truth: *1 Timothy 3:14-15*
5. Temple of the Holy Spirit: *1 Corinthians 3:9-17 / 1 Peter 2:4-10*

EXAMPLES FOR US TO FOLLOW

Mongolia Kingdom Partnership⁴

In 1989 you could have counted the number of Mongol Christians on the fingers of one hand. Perestroika was opening the door to Christian missions. Unlike the competitive scramble that was characteristic of the re-entry of Western Christianity to Eastern Europe, the opening of Mongolia was marked with a conference of interested parties convened by Interdev, following two years of slow, patient contacts with individuals, undertaken by Phill Butler.

In Mongolia, the Lord has called together some of the most single-minded of missionaries to share the Gospel. Interpersonal tensions were never far from the surface. But, as God's people spoke frankly to each other at the conference, as they opened the Scriptures and prayed together, miracles happened. Broken relationships were restored. Within the diverse, consensus-based partnership that emerged, there were several agencies whose objectives were close enough for them to seek an organic unity: a constitutionally united mission. Joint Christian Services (JCS) was born, a partnership within a partnership, which related to the other agencies on the scene as a single body. As strong as JCS is, the diversity of the body requires the wider partnership to provide a platform for wider communication.

But, what of the outcomes? By 1995, five years later, over 30 Mongol fellowships meet every week and the number of baptized believers is estimated at between 3,000 and 3,500. Mongol evangelists are sharing the Gospel in remote places. The "Jesus Film" has been seen by an estimated half million people. The New Testament has been widely distributed with a new translation is currently in preparation. A United Bible School has grown out of the partnership, which now involves more than 35 agencies representing over 150 workers, half of whom are non-western.

Fellowship and cooperation are evident at many levels between westerners and Koreans, Filipinos, and Singapore-Chinese. It's a great family that God has called together from many nations to participate in the birth of the Mongolian Church.

KINGDOM COLLABORATION⁵

Modern Partnerships

Following the Second World War, projects like ACROSS in the Southern Sudan, HEED Bangladesh, the IAM (International Assistance Mission) in Afghanistan, and the UMN (United Mission to Nepal) broke new ground, showing that God's people could work together – often with significant, sometimes remarkable outcomes. In the resource countries, entities such as IFMA (Interdenominational Foreign Mission Association), EFMA (Evangelical Fellowship of Mission Agencies) in the U. S., the Evangelical Missionary Alliance in the U. K., and the India Missions Association have demonstrated that sending agencies can find real value in shared information, best practices, and encouragement by linking together while

retaining their individual identities. (The India Missions Association is now the world's largest association of mission agencies, with over 200 Indian mission agencies as members.)

From its roots in a 1966 Billy Graham Congress in Berlin and the historic 1974 meeting in Lausanne, Switzerland, the Lausanne Movement linked individuals rather than organizations. Its power was the core call of evangelism expressed in a twin commitment to holism (the Lausanne Covenant) and the awareness of unreached peoples (Ralph Winter's singular contribution to the 1974 Lausanne Congress). The Lausanne Movement provided a safe haven for many individuals who shared these commitments but found little if any, resonance in their own denominational or organizational structures. What was emerging as a powerful trend – the shift of power from the center to the edges – was being realized in the world community committed to mission and evangelism.

The Seminal Year of 1986

In June 1986, 14 individuals representing eight ministries met in the Maestranza Hotel in Malaga, Spain to consider one question: “If we want to see real breakthroughs for Christ among the 60 million Muslims in Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco, is there anything that we could do better together than if we continue to work separately?”

At the end of nearly four days, these leaders had identified nearly 20 things vital to church-planting efforts that *could only be done together*. Yet, like most others, this group had never taken one initiative together. So, what should be the priority? After more rounds of prayer and consensus-building, they decided to focus on one key action point. In praise of what God had done in their midst, the group spontaneously broke into song! By 2002 the number of language groups in which similar partnerships had developed grew to over 90, stretching from West Africa to Northeast, South, and Southeast Asia. Some of the smaller partnerships included 10-15 ministries, while larger ones frequently had 25 or more.

More Power to the Edges

A natural by-product of all these developments was the rise of the AD2000 and Beyond Movement in the early 1990s. (Editorial note: This was a worldwide network focused on reaching the unreached peoples before AD2000).

With a focus on common vision and practical outcomes rather than organizational structure, AD2000 personified the heightened profile of missions cooperation. Not surprisingly, the AD2000 Movement was always rooted more deeply in the non-Western church than the Western. The North American and European church and missions communities were slower to sense the shifting of the “center of gravity” of the global missions movement. Non-Westerners, on the other hand, welcomed the vision, access to participation, and voice they were given in the AD2000 and Beyond Movement.

Functional Collaboration Becomes a Significant Factor

The structural trends of collaboration today continue to follow the patterns developed in the 1980s and 1990s. Cooperative efforts have naturally coalesced around major criteria:

- **linguistic** (specific language groups)
- **geographic** (countries or regions)
- **functional** (specialized issues that cut across linguistic and geographical boundaries).

The language-specific partnerships have been just that – partnerships or diverse groups focused on a common issue. But the regional consultations have looked more like networks – diverse groups sharing resources/information in order to do their own work more effectively.

New Strategic Networks in the Field

As the global church has increasingly taken ownership of the Great Commission, simultaneously the partnership/network movement has gained traction around the world. COMIBAM has become the rallying point for the Ibero-American world of missions. The network encourages and links missionary training, mobilization, national missionary initiatives, resource development, and partnership training in the Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking worlds.

MANI (Movement for African National Initiatives) has emerged in Africa as the galvanizing network for unreached peoples, national evangelism and transformation, and prayer networks. At their continental consultation in Nairobi in 2007, approximately 500 leaders from 50 African countries gathered to assess the state of evangelization in Africa. Sixteen work-groups addressed topics such as women's issues, Islam, oral communication of the Gospel, media ministry, and mobilizing, sending, and caring for African missionaries.

Other regional networks focused on the unreached include SEALINK in Southeast Asia and AWEMA in the Middle East. On a global scale, Ethnè '06 brought together 350 leaders (from about 50 countries) focused on unreached peoples. The majority of the participants in these working meetings were non-Westerners, echoing the experience of the AD2000 & Beyond Movement.

Blurring of the Lines: “Field” and “Resource” Countries

Increasingly non-Western countries are setting ambitious goals for their contribution to the unfinished task. Korea is now second in number of missionaries sent. The Nigerian Evangelical Missions Association, with over 100 indigenous mission agencies, has set a goal of 50,000 Nigerian missionaries focused on unreached peoples by 2025. The Philippine Missions Association has set goals for 5,000+ new missionaries in the next ten years. Christian populations from Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq already have many lay missionaries in every country of the Arabian Peninsula. Latin American churches and mission agencies have sent hundreds of missionaries, particularly to the Muslim world. These non-Western missionaries now heavily populate virtually every frontier mission partnership and network in the world. 2005 saw the dream of many key leaders come true with the inaugural meeting in Amsterdam of the **Global Network of Mission Structures (GNMS)**. Thirty-one leaders from 13 countries met to examine how a network of mission agencies/structures might more fully empower frontier ministry. An executive board was formed; incorporation has been completed; a working office in Malaysia was designated; and a website established. And, all throughout recent history, the **World Evangelical Alliance's Missions Commission** has played an active role in linking the growing diversity of the global Church and its commitment to frontier missions.

New Networks in the Resource Countries

In the West, a growing trend has been for local churches to connect around their common interests in language groups or countries. In North America alone, over 70 networks of churches are now focused on specific people groups or countries. Other networks address similar but larger, more complex challenges. For example, **China Challenge and Impact**

Indonesia provide annual working meetings for a wide range of individuals and agencies committed to unreached people in those regions. These resource networks provide the best of all worlds. People from resource countries can connect with each other – and, in the field, with those cooperating there. Field personnel can not only link through their field partnerships, but they have networks in the resource countries with whom they can communicate.

“Ethne ’06: A Sober Celebration”⁶

For five days in March 2006, over 350 mission leaders from every continent came together at ‘Ethne 06’ to celebrate “Great Commission” progress, assess status and accelerate efforts to reach the least-reached peoples of the world. The meeting was a continuation of numerous global consultations on unreached peoples that have been held over the years, growing out of the AD 2000 & Beyond Movement, the Great Commission Roundtable.

Gathering in a Southeast Asian country—which itself has many unreached people groups—the participants heard reports from Latin America, the Arabian Peninsula, North Africa, West and Central Africa, South Asia, and Southeast Asia. While celebrating progress, participants were sobered by the reality of the world’s least-reached.



Twenty years ago, 25% of the world had no access to the Gospel; today, that figure has risen to 28 percent. Meanwhile, in 1900, Christianity represented 33% of the world—a figure that has not changed over the past century. Participants spent significant time in prayer for each of the regions and then broke into four strategy tracks dealing with global issues.

The **Harvest Linked Prayer Strategy** track carried forward a global initiative to facilitate a year-long prayer campaign for the least-reached peoples of the world. Track participants will be providing resources for each of 12 world regions including DVDs, prayer guides, bulletin inserts, and more. Currently, resources are in 16 languages with more planned.

The **UPG Workers Track** focused on challenges and issues related to recruiting, training, deploying, and caring for workers sent from every continent to the least-reached. Track participants will be focused on identifying resources, developing resources where none exist, and promoting those resources particularly to those who are unaware of them.

The **Frontier Crisis Response Network** focused on the increasing numbers of natural disasters and how best to equip the church to be prepared for response in areas where there is no viable church to lead the response. Track participants will be working together to create a global network that can help communication and collaboration in crisis situations. Maybe more significantly, this group will develop strategies which build toward long-term ministry in crisis response.

The **Holistic Gospel Movement Track** will share information, conduct joint research projects, and hold collaborative training events to see more Gospel planting movements (also called church planting movements) that result in consistently reproducing indigenous churches that seek to live out the whole Gospel to the whole world.

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On the last two days, a number of smaller workshops and seminars were held on topics such as mobilization, communication, member care, and research.

On the final evening, the participants gathered for worship and to hear of exciting action steps put forward by each of the four strategy groups and by several of the workshops.

Also, the Ethne Steering Committee was thrilled to announce that a general agreement had been reached (with details to be worked out before formal announcement) that another regional mission network would take the main lead in facilitating the next Ethne Steering Committee and next global “UPG-focused” meeting.

In a closing commitment time, representatives from each of 12 world regions, wearing their national dress, served communion to the delegates and led a candle lighting ceremony. With many prayers, tears, and a general ‘family’ atmosphere, the delegates closed the meeting, renewed in their passion to reach the unreached.

The Final Frontier

Bill O’Brien, missiologist and missions futurist, has stated that the last frontier of missions is collaboration. A burst of cooperative spirit in the Great Commission community can all too easily give way to an imbalanced attitude of cooperation “only if we can be in control” or a disgust with political infighting and a resulting desire to go it alone.

Around the Great Commission community, many give only lip service to cooperation. The norm tends to be passive cooperation – in other words, “I am not thinking about cooperation, but if you approach me with an offer to cooperate, I will do it if it looks like it will be an advantage in achieving my previously set goals.”

In the 1980’s and 1990’s, we saw a real boost in the Great Commission community as some key parties sought to more intentionally catalyze collaboration. These parties sought not to ask ‘what can we do?’, but ‘what must be done?’ Together they tried to catalyze partnerships which could work toward common plans and goals while continually catalyzing the involvement of others.

However, while some of this continues, many of the major parties that had a burden for catalyzing this cooperation and collaboration are either dead or on life-support. AD2000 and Interdev closed their doors. CSI was killed. ACMC, Caleb Project, Joshua Project, and World Evangelization Research Center are struggling to survive. And yet, the need for connecting, cooperating, coordinating, and collaborating are even greater today.

If we can continue to rise above control and pride issues to be servant leaders, we could be tremendous catalysts for Great Commission efforts around the world. One of our guiding principles could be, “We will partner where we can and pioneer where we must.” Key Principle: **Ask not what you can do, but what must be done for God’s glory.**

Most people are limited to what they feel they can do and like to do. If we can think beyond this model, we could be catalysts for wide-ranging partnerships focused on cities, states, nations (such as the Mongolia partnership), peoples (the Bhojpuri of India is a great example), languages (Persian speakers, Arab World partnership, etc.) and global initiatives (Ethne).

PARTNERSHIP

REFLECT #5

1. What are some key principles in partnering?
2. How can these principles apply to you and your partners?
3. How will the realities of global partnering change the way you do mission?

SELF-AWARENESS, SURVIVAL, AND SOLUTION

Examine your own heart and mind. To be a good partner means to be in right relationship with God and then with others. We need to avoid the wrong attitudes and actions and embrace the right attitudes.

Wrong Attitudes

Be aware of the barriers to right relationship and effective partnering. We face three main enemies – the world, our flesh, and the devil. Be aware of all of them, and take steps to allow God to change these.

1. Sin (and broken relationships) is the main reason the world remains unreached.
2. Pride/ego and the resulting desire to accomplish your purposes alone or only work with people that agree with you results in a lack of humility and servanthood.
3. Satan sows seeds of dissension and mistrust.
4. The commitment to see the task finished no matter the setbacks or disappointments. This also includes providing sufficient resources to do the job.

Right Attitudes

Examine Philippians 2: 1-8.

How should we act? How was Jesus the example for us?

1. Is there any encouragement from belonging to Christ? Any comfort from His love? Any fellowship together in the Spirit? Is your heart tender and compassionate?
2. Agree wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one mind and purpose.
3. Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves.
4. Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too.
5. You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had.
6. Though He was God, He did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, He gave up His divine privileges; He took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being.

7. When He appeared in human form, He humbled Himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross.

Key Questions to Consider:

- **Self-awareness:** Can you put aside your culture or unwrap yourself and your understanding of the Bible from your cultural background? Do you see the need to do this? Are you willing to be a learner and not an expert or teacher?
- **Population:** Learn as much as you can about the population (neighborhood, city, village, region, country, people group, etc.) that you will serve. Learn their language. The resources to reach that group are already in the harvest – your job is to catalyze the insiders and their resources for a long-term impact.
- **Believers and Churches:** What other Christians around the world have an interest in your focus population? Who is already working there and what are they doing? How could you partner with them as a servant? Who else is interested but needs help to become engaged?
- **Synergy:** How can humanitarian workers, business people, gospel trainers, educators, and others be a part of working together to see your people and their society transformed by the gospel? What can you do to create this cooperative synergy?
- **Local:** What are you doing right now to partner with others in the Body of Christ to serve and reach the lost around you? Do you know who is working together in your location and how you can be involved in strategic ways?
- **Beyond the Church:** What partners outside the Body of Christ can you find to cooperate with? How can you best do that?

WHAT IF WE TRULY ACTED LIKE THE BODY OF CHRIST?

Unity in Diversity

- All races and classes and ethnic groups learn from each other. We seek honest and open dialogue. We serve and empower each other.
- We share and live out the Gospel without imposing culture. We realize that God loves variety and all cultures will keep their distinctiveness while being re-shaped by God.
- We are facilitating a global “body of Christ” nervous system to create more effective collaboration.
- We are sharing stories cross-culturally – not just surface communication but deep dynamic equivalence communication.

Every Believer

- Every Christian recognizes their missiological call and is living out God's Great Commandments and Commission.
- We are helping every believer learn cross-cultural communication and service. We have created models of apprenticeship for leadership training as opposed to a degree process.

Every Church

- Every church is an equipping and releasing center for members touching the world.
- Local churches are at the heart of the mission effort, not in competition with the mission agencies but as partners in the process. We have embraced the various expressions of the church, whether it is local churches or field teams or specialty ministries.
- The Holy Spirit is sending and we are releasing. The primary emphasis is not on individuals but on the Body (churches, teams, groups).
- We have been a part of divine catalyzation of systematic new models for kingdom advance through releasing the whole church for the whole world in business, education, medicine and all the domains of all the nations. The various giftings in these domains are working together in great synergy.
- We are no longer merely focused on going and being sent – but on “being” in community with the nations from our front door to the ends of the earth.
- We prioritize relationships with God, with each other as the global Body of Christ and with Gospel-starved people all around the world.

SO WHAT? LEARNING ACTIVITIES ~ BEFORE YOU GO

If we wish to be better servants and partners cross-culturally, we must be proactive in doing the kinds of activities that make us self-aware and others-directed.

The following activities will help you to actively and intentionally prepare to partner with others in the Body of Christ.

As you try these activities, record your difficulties, struggles, and successes in your Learning Journal. Or if you have already done these either in your home culture or cross-culturally, recall the difficulties, struggles, and successes you encountered.

Imagine

If you could create a perfect global team for serving your people group – what would it look like? Who would be involved? What types of gifts would they have?

Now ask God to put together the perfect team He can imagine.

Lifestyle

What lifestyle choices can you make NOW to be a better servant to others? What can you do for the sake of the Gospel to partner meaningfully with Christians from other groups and backgrounds?

Formation

God desires relationship with you. What are you doing to “be” his child versus “doing” His work?

Language and Customs

Begin to learn another language. Consider spending significant time worshipping and working with those from another cultural background right now before you leave.

Stretch Life-on-Life

Are you presently involved with those of a different culture: language, ethnicity, religion, lifestyle, etc. Cross-cultural living should not begin just when you step off a plane in a distant country. If you are unable or unwilling to live cross-culturally here, what is to say you will there? Seek out those who are culturally different and find ways to love them and serve them and partner with them.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR *PARTNERSHIP*

Butler, Phill. *Well Connected: Releasing Power and Restoring Hope*. Franklin: Authentic, 2006.

Butler is one of the modern pioneers of mission partnering as the former head of InterCristo and Interdev and current leader of VisionSynergy. He examines partnership in six sections. 1) The Big Picture 2) Two: The God Design 3) Behind the Scenes 4) On the Way 5) Working It Out 6) Special Cases, Special Opportunities

Addicott, Ernie. *Body Matters: A Guide to Partnership in Christian Mission*. Edmonds: Interdev Partnership Associates, 2005.

Addicott's collaborative insights stem from 30 years of hands-on experience in cross-cultural mission and from a 10-year crucible of developing international, multi-cultural, interdenominational, and multi-lateral expertise.

He applies his acute strategic awareness of global mission to deliver a fresh testament of Biblically based best practice for Christ's body relating & co-laboring.

NOTES

¹Adapted from the article by Fritz, Gregory E. "Moving Toward Partnership in Reaching the People Clusters." in *Caleb Project*, March 1997; accessed 2006.

²Adapted from presentation by Brian O'Connell, REACTServices.com. Used with permission.

³By Brian F. O'Connell (with thanks to Russ Simons!) © 2005 / Brian O'Connell, *REACTServices.com*

⁴From Addicott, Ernie. "Mongolia: Kingdom Partnership after 1000 Years of Darkness," in the *Lausanne Magazine* (Summer 1997); accessed 2006.

⁵A condensed version of the article "A Survey of Kingdom of Collaboration"

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(<http://www.missionfrontiers.org/issue/article/a-survey-of-kingdom-collaboration>), by Phill Butler in *Mission Frontiers* 28/3 (May-June 2006). Used with permission.

⁶“Ethne ’06: A Sober Celebration” by Justin Long (<https://www.restorehopetoday.org/wp-content/uploads/Body-of-Christ-Missiology.pdf>); accessed 2006.

AUTHOR

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