

10.21.20 Zoom Call Metrolina Association Dr. John H. Ewart

How Can Associations and the Local Churches Partner Together in Missions?

The partnership of an association and local churches should be a contextual missions affinity network (MAN).

1. Missions Definitions

- What is the difference between the Mission and missions?
 - God is on an unchanging Mission (Missio Dei) to bring glory to Himself.
 - One way He will do this is by redeeming the nations.
 - We do not get to change this Mission. It is biblical and set. We must operate within it to help fulfill it. He wants to use us. One way to be used by Him is through missions.
- What is the difference between missions and ministry?
 - Ministry in this conversation is meeting the physical, emotional, and relational needs of people. There are many methods and opportunities for ministry.
 - Ministry can be/must be very contextual.
- What is the difference between missions and evangelism?
 - Evangelism is: *Intentionally preparing for and pursuing opportunities to personally share the gospel of Jesus Christ with those who are unsaved in the power of the Holy Spirit while leaving the results to God.* (John Ewart with a nod to Bill Bright)
 - Missions is larger than this. It can include pre-evangelism activity and ministry where relationships are being build and opportunities for the Gospel are being opened, evangelism where the actual Gospel is shared clearly, and post-evangelism where the necessary follow-up, discipleship, church planting and growth must be conducted. A missions strategy can include all of these components and dynamics.
- What then is a definition of missions?
 - *Intentionally preparing for and pursuing personal and corporate opportunities to engage in pre-evangelism, evangelism and post-evangelism in cross-cultural contexts in the power of the Holy Spirit and toward the fulfillment of God's Mission.* (Ewart)

2. Missions Assessment

- This is a very important and often missing piece.
- We must understand our context and its potential as well as ourselves and our needed adjustments.
- There are many tools available to assists with both quantitative and qualitative assessment.
 - Mission Insite
 - Peoples Next Door

- Revitalize Bundle from Revitalize Network (Rainer and Lawless)
- Who are you? Who have you been? Who do you need to become?
- Where are you? How has that changed and is changing?
- Your context will define much of your strategy. You must understand it.

3. **Missions Education**

- Missions models – understand them from a historical, current and contextual viewpoint. What are current best practices and resources?
- Methods can range from pulpit, to specials studies, to conferences, to more relational.
- Missions mentoring – Engaged churches share best contextual practices and resourcing with one another and the association facilitates.
- Experienced and resourced churches helping those who are not within the local missions affinity network.

4. **Missions Activity/Mobilization**

- Based upon assessment and education, projects can be planned together.
- Ministry projects meeting real community need opening the door for personal evangelism.
- Jointly sponsored church planting.
- Local UPG Bible studies.
- Specialized trips and projects for specific ministry areas within the churches such as women’s ministry, student ministry, a language group, etc.
- Local, state, national and international mission trips with team members from multiple churches facilitated by the association.
- Churches of all sizes and resources can be represented when there is a joint team.
- With the impact of COVID, shorter closer trips and projects will be more likely and have great opportunity.

5. **Missions Support/Advocacy**

- Prayer support must be at every level and all stages. It should be made as specific as possible based upon assessment and education.
- Giving. Some may be able to resource ministry and missions and would do so more if they knew the specific needs based on assessment and education.
- Special joint projects like Stateside Assignment homes for furloughing missionaries.
- Practical support in the preparation phases of missions projects. A church might not be able to go on the trip but they can be responsible for packing the craft supplies, or the medicine, or...

We must not be afraid to work together. In today's climate, our communities are filled with so much need the church must respond on mission. We must partner together across our associations for both unity and diversity because our communities desperately need to see such a testimony of love and grace and the doorways for the Gospel to be shared must be opened.

Remember the *Discipline of Why?*

A question I ask repeatedly when I'm consulting or pastoring a church is "Why?" This question is a missing piece in too many church leadership puzzles. There is a lack of constant focus on the why. I find myself discussing this problem almost weekly with leaders and students. For a variety of reasons, these leaders have been distracted by the what and how and have taken their eyes off the primary issues. There is a better way—a better matrix—of thinking and focus. *For church health, we must ask the right questions in the right order.* I refer to this simply as the *Discipline of Why?* Take a deep breath, slow down, and really think about this:

***Why must always precede who which must always precede what
which must always precede how.***

These questions sound so easy, but I assure you, the discipline to continuously ask them in the right order is quite difficult. In fact, the actual existence of this discipline is quite rare in my experience. After years of ministry and too many conversations with church leaders and members to count, I continue to notice its absence.

In my own American culture, many church leaders and members want to immediately plunge into the what and how. What do we need to do to fix this? How can I fix this? How can we do that? How can we change? How can we grow? How can we reach people? I get asked these questions constantly.

These are good questions with good intent. They are the questions of practical nuts-and-bolts type stuff. And at some point, you must answer them. The problem is without the more important questions being asked and answered first to determine the course and shape of these final actions, churches and their leaders often become victims of reactionary thinking and doing. They hop from one how to the next without much long-term success or effectiveness. They ride a swinging pendulum back and forth seeking out the next big, cool thing to copy regardless of whether it is what their context and purpose really demands.

Unfortunately, our "Whats?" and "Hows?" are often driven by what we see happening on the surface around us and do not require true theological or even contextual assessment or exegesis. They lead us to an incomplete missiology. They are basic questions of tasks and resources, programming, and projects. Catalogs, conferences, and calendars can answer most of these questions. Plug and play isn't enough. There must be more.

"Who?", is an important question. It is a question of identity. It is a search for being and not just doing. Who have we been? Who are we now? Who does God want us to be? Who is our

community? Who does God want them to be? This line of inquiry takes us deeper. These are questions of theology, relationship, discipleship, and contextualization that will define and direct the resulting tasks and resources: the “Whats?” and “Hows?” We need answers to these identification questions to begin to uncover in what actions we are supposed to engage and how we are supposed to engage in them.

But more important than what, how, or who is the discipline of beginning with “Why?” This question is greater and more difficult. It truly requires a disciplined thought process and action plan. “Why?” is a question of purpose, of mission, and of existence. Why did God create and save me? Why did he put me or us in this place at this time with these people? The question of why changes everything else. The answers provide us with proper perspective and focus. Knowing the answer to why produces the foundation for obedience to bring God glory. Our motivation, our reason for everything comes from these answers. We must know why we are seeking to become more missional. Why do you want your church (you and your fellow members) to be healthy? Why do you need to be biblically healthy?

Remember the old Mark Twain quote that goes something like: “The two most important days in a man’s life are the day he is born and the day he knows why.” It is life changing to know the answer to why.

Why are you here? Why are you alive? Why does your church exist? Why does your church do and act the way they do? Knowing changes everything.