

WHAT IS MISSIONS-STRATEGIC FOR YOUR CHURCH?

No one wants to settle for “good” and miss “the best,” so how do you determine what is most strategic for your church’s involvement at this particular time? Of course, the ultimate identity of what is most strategic must come from your sense of God’s direction, but here are six measures of strategic importance.

Reaching unreached people

Missiologists note that the use of the term, “ethnê,” in Scripture indicates a culturally-related people group rather than a political state. They point out the disproportionate number of missionaries focused on peoples who already possess the gospel while thousands of unreached and least reached peoples have few workers.

Many of these peoples now either have an individual or small group, often Christians from a nearby people, quietly living among them sharing the gospel. In other cases, some entity—church or agency (again, often non-Western) is making plans to reach them.

Despite this good news, seeing a vibrant, reproducing church-planting movement established among each of these groups is still a good way off. Focusing on these nearly untouched peoples must continue to be a larger priority if we truly believe that Jesus commissioned His Church to carry the good news to the ends of the earth.

Multiplication of impact

$4 + 4 + 4 = 12$ but $4 \times 4 \times 4 = 64$. It’s the power of multiplication! Spiritually, multiplication happens most often by building and equipping leaders. Paul described it in 2 Timothy 2:2 as, “And the things you have heard me say...entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.”

Multiplying on-site workers is certainly strategic. Other churches are engaging the multiplication principle by helping to prepare Majority World workers to go as missionaries.

Responsiveness

“Find out where God is working and join Him there,” is the rallying cry Henry Blackaby popularized across the Western church a few years ago. The concept provides another measure of what is strategic in missions. If a powerful fire of evangelism or revival is sweeping through a people or geographic region evidencing God at work, it is logical to pour fuel on the flame!

Areas of spiritual openness are popping up around the world. Certainly this “good soil” is a wonderful place to center ministry involvement.

Justice and mercy needs

Crying out for Christian intervention are crushing global problems such as trafficking, poverty, children at risk, refugee needs, and illiteracy. To fulfill Jesus’ command to “love your neighbor as yourself,” believers will need to be moved to action.

Meeting physical needs is not a sufficient end in itself; Christians must carry the life-saving message of hope in Christ. However, loving and caring in Jesus’ name for the billions of hurting people on this planet is certainly strategic Kingdom work.

The right window of time

When the iron curtain crumbled, church leaders called for a concentrated effort to take advantage of what many thought would be a limited time of sowing and harvesting in the former Soviet Union. As predicted, less than two decades later, Western access to some of those new nations is difficult.

Other events can also create opportunities. For example, following the tsunami in Indonesia and the earthquake in Pakistan, Christians were allowed access to previously closed areas.

Have unusual circumstances opened doors for your church at this particular time? Perhaps God has brought a new immigrant population to your area, or a famine where your missionary works has lowered resistance to the gospel. Jesus taught His disciples to be astute about the times in which they lived; taking advantage of timely opportunities is biblically wise.

Invitation to partner with Majority World Christians

As Christianity expands around the world, especially in the global South, the national church in many places is taking on roles that missionaries previously carried while they continue to look for help from their brothers and sisters in the West. Strategic opportunities for linking churches to work alongside and under national churches abound in many places. Churches need to carefully consider these requests for ministry help.