

POSTINGS

ARTICLES FOR CHURCH MISSIONS LEADERS

Missions Stewardship

THESE FOUR “M’S”
SUMMARIZE YOUR TASK



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Leading a church in missions is like caring for a garden. If gardeners focus all their energy on simply watering their plants, or they neglect watering while constantly pouring on fertilizer, their crops will produce little or nothing at all. But if they balance nourishment and care, their garden thrives for the benefit of many.

The same is true with church missions. Leaders who focus on one aspect of missions responsibility to the neglect of others become frustrated when their efforts bear limited fruit. Good missions management requires giving attention to multiple stewardship tasks and an awareness of “hidden” opportunities for growth.

Your task is to help your people discover where their gifts will have greatest Kingdom benefit—and often these are best utilized in a missions context!

To make it easy to remember, here are four “M’s” to describe the bigger picture of missions stewardship for every church:

Members. Missionaries. Money. Media.

In almost every church, each of these missions aspects holds wonderful but untapped potential. Perhaps this simple way of outlining missions leaders’ responsibilities will be helpful.

Members

The people sitting in our worship services week after week are our most valuable resource—and almost always underutilized. Unless we proactively create pathways for our people to use their God-given gifts and experience, it should come as no surprise that they lose interest. And failure to engage our people becomes a domino effect of dwindling resources in the other areas—missionaries, money, and media.

It’s easy to fall back on the excuse that the church is infected with missions apathy and unfairly place full responsibility for generating congregational interest on the pastor. Or we search for some new, exciting missions program or event, convinced that a new approach will awaken passion while ignoring the evidence that introducing yet another program or missions event often has diminishing returns—especially for younger adults.

Engaging the “M” of members requires energy and creativity focused on individual potential. A great way to begin is to sit down with people one on one and ask questions about what they love to do, what expertise they have developed over time, how they use their free time, etc. The exciting reality is that God wants to use your congregation’s abilities because He gave them in the first place! Your task is to help your people discover where their gifts will have greatest Kingdom benefit—and often these are best utilized in a missions context! What a privilege you have to match people with opportunities!

Here are just a couple of examples:

- ***Engage teachers’ skills in contemporary educational methodologies.*** Instead of taking a team to run a VBS abroad, would there be longer-term impact from sending a couple of your educators to help equip indigenous teachers to better communicate Bible truth all 52 weeks per year? Or could your teachers share skills in classroom management or how to use art as trauma therapy?
- ***Don’t waste business expertise.*** Members of your congregation who own or manage a small business have life skills desperately needed by new entrepreneurs around the world and by disadvantaged young adults here at home. Ask your partners if they could utilize businesspeople from your congregation to lead sessions on small business development. Other fruitful options? Mentoring a young immigrant in your community or coaching an entrepreneur on the other side of the world via the internet.



A REAL-LIFE EXAMPLE



A number of years ago, a businessman in a Wisconsin church discovered that poor farmers in one Southeast Asian country were losing almost half of their corn crop to rot because of the humid climate.

He came home and communicated the problem to a men's group he knew in rural Iowa. These men volunteered to dismantle their unused corn cribs and ship them to Asia. Meanwhile, biomass corn dryers were built at an in-country Christian vocational training school, providing much-needed jobs. Pairing the reassembled corn cribs with the driers successfully stopped the corn loss!

Indigenous church planters took this simple technology into unreached villages. Helping local farmers better feed their families and increase their income provided a means of support for the indigenous church planters and also won a hearing for the gospel.

Why did this happen? All because a farm-equipment dealer went to Asia, used his expertise to identify a need, and contacted farmers he knew who could help address the problem.

Related *Postings* articles:

- > [Short-Term Ministry Ideas](#) provides dozens more possibilities.
- > [A New Kind of Missionary](#) describes two church members using their skills.

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Missionaries

Caring for missionaries and sending new workers may be the aspect of missions stewardship that leaders think of first. Here are two areas in which your church might want to improve management of this strategic resource.

Expand your care. How can you care better? The number one choice would be to visit workers on the field—not primarily to give advice but to listen and learn. Could you send one or

two members of your congregation who can discern wisely, then pray and minister to your partners on a deep level? This may or may not be the pastor. A mature church member with mentoring or coaching skills can be invaluable, and woman-to-woman caregiving is powerful.

Be more proactive in appropriate direction. A few churches may dictate too much about their worker's ministry, but far more

provide too little input. If you have sent the missionary, then you are also responsible to help assure that their time and gifts are well invested. Are they in the right place doing the right thing? Ask the hard questions as you seek to help them flourish and be fruitful, especially when their context or personal circumstances are changing.

A REAL- LIFE STORY



One single missionary waited 12 years for her church to send someone to visit her in Africa. Walking through the slums with her gave them a whole new appreciation for the challenges she faced. In addition, they gained a new level of respect for her ability in the language and marveled at her relationship with her team.

One morning, despite sensing some unspoken hesitancy in the visitors, the missionary took her guests to visit a teenage

pregnancy center. They listened to the humbling story of the widowed older lady whose vision and persistence had created this center. And they met the girls and heard some of their difficult stories. As the worker debriefed with her visitors afterward, it was clear that God was using their visit to transform their understanding of her ministry.

"After that trip so many things changed," the missionary shares. "They knew me in a new way. They prayed in a new way. I'm so thankful that they finally came."

Related *Postings* resources:

- **In-Person Care Part 1** provides suggestions on how to make a field visit most beneficial.
- **Wise Accountability** shows how church assessments of their workers can be helpful and life-giving for missionary and ministry when approached sensitively with an attitude of mutual humility.

Money

The task of church missions leaders is to manage missions contributions wisely, but it also involves assisting the congregation to grow in their understanding of how to steward their personal resources according to biblical values. In Luke 12, Jesus tells a sobering parable about a rich fool building bigger barns instead of investing for eternity.

Can you initiate studies that will help your people be wise in managing what God has given them?
Whole Life Generosity Devotional:

Living in Relationship, Gratitude, and Release by Skye Jethani is a great study for small groups.

Redirect from impulsive to intentional giving. Younger generations often give on sympathetic impulse. How can your missions team help them build patterns of regular giving that channel their compassion into strategic efforts?

Take responsibility to use funds for greatest impact. Here is a simple exercise that can help determine if past financial commitments or emotional ties are inappropriately

controlling budget decisions: Suppose you were choosing how to disperse your missions funds for the next year without any prior history of missions support. Would you change the percentage of funds designated to various categories of ministries? Would you support the same organizations and workers you are today and at similar levels?

Churches need to avoid creating hardship by making changes too suddenly. But they are responsible to make prayerfully discerned changes that earmark funds for strategic work done with excellence.

A related *Postings* resource:

➤ **Steward Your Lifestyle** shows how a financial finish line led two young adults to missions generosity.

Media

Church missions leaders frequently wring their hands over the lack of platform time and insufficient space given to missions in church-wide communications. Can you instead see it as a challenge rather than a roadblock?

How do the gatekeepers in these two areas (probably your worship leader and communications coordinator) perceive you? Do you directly or indirectly communicate that your missions message is more

important than anything else in your church? Sadly, this is too often the case, and it creates barriers.

Listen and commit to work together. Sit down with these leaders and take time to listen to their perspective to better understand the scheduling and communication challenges that they face. Acknowledge that they have responsibilities to the whole church, and affirm that you are both on the same team. Rather than simply asking for more platform time, discuss with the worship leader what they believe will make the time you have most powerful. It's helpful if

you see your platform message not as an end in itself but as an attractive invitation for future interactions.

Make a communications plan. Here's a **communication planning tool** to help you assess your current communications as well as identify untapped opportunities.

Because of the rapidly changing media platforms at your disposal, recruit younger people to create messaging that speaks to their generations. And remember that regardless of age, people respond to personal stories.

A related *Postings* resource:

➤ **Missions Essentials** highlights some key missions concepts that churches assume their people know—but they don't.

Evaluating Our Missions Stewardship

Here is a simple tool to help you assess your overall 4 M's stewardship. You can also use this link to access the [stewardship tool](#) as a separate document.

	MEMBERS	MISSIONARIES	MONEY	MEDIA
1. Give your team an A, B, C grade on your current effectiveness in stewarding each of these areas.				
2. Assign a #1 and #2 to the areas you think your team has the potential to steward better in the coming year.				
3. Which area are you personally passionate to see grow in effectiveness this coming year?				
4. What untapped potential do you see in each of these areas of stewardship?				
5. Are there people in your church who have the ability to help your church improve in one of these areas? Put their names in the appropriate box.				
6. What other thoughts do you have about how to better steward your church's 4 M's of resources?				
7. What first step would you recommend your team initiate?				

Evaluating Your Stewardship of Members, Missionaries, Money, and Media

How can church missions leaders make sure all four of these areas are receiving the time and attention they need? Here's a place to begin:

Share the evaluation on the previous page with the members of your leadership team and ask them to take some time on their own to pray about their evaluation and then individually answer the questions.

At your next team meeting, discuss your answers. Summarize what you see God doing.

Pray together about which one of these four responsibilities you feel He is leading you to focus on improving in the immediate future. Concentrate on the areas where He has given your team clear agreement on the direction forward.

Do some of those whose names are listed in #5 have gifts in the area you feel led to focus on? You likely have more people and resources for improvement than you thought!

Don't feel overwhelmed by your responsibility to carefully steward these multiple aspects of missions in your church. Remember, God created you with very human limitations.

At the same time, don't lose sight of the fact that you serve a big God who promises that His power is available to work through you and your team to nurture a plentiful harvest.



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