

# “Church-to-Church Partnerships”

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A beautiful model of mission work for churches/associations to follow is found in the book of Acts. Paul went on four different mission trips. If you study Paul’s missionary trips, you will notice that sometime after his first missionary trip he went back to the same areas on his second missionary trip. The purpose of his second trip is clearly defined for us in scripture (Acts 15:36). If you continue to read, you will find that Paul went again for the third time back to those first locations he had been to earlier. This is a good picture of how churches/associations can do modern day church-to-church partnership work. The Church in Antioch sent their mission team out year after year to the same locations to help start churches and to strengthen and encourage existing churches.

I believe that church-to-church partnerships are the most effective way to do mission work. Why? Let’s look at some of the benefits of a church-to-church partnership.

## The Benefits of a Church-to-Church Partnership

- **Location**

A church-to-church partnership can help your church stay focused in the same location and develop a strategy in ministry to reach, disciple and equip the local church you are partnering with year after year. In the long run, it will save time in researching for a new location.

There are some churches/associations that go on an annual mission trip. Each year a new location or site is sought after. The missions’ coordinator for the church/association looks for a place to go and then leads the group on to that location. One mission leader was talking with me about the forty-some different countries he had visited while on mission trips. **I guess that is a good way to see the world, but is it the best way to do mission work?** We must ask ourselves, “How effective is that method?” I will not say that God cannot bless or use other methods of mission work, but I would say that church-to-church partnerships are the better and more effective way to do mission work.

While I was a student at Southwest Baptist University, I went on my first mission trip to Haiti with the University. Charles Chatman, our mission leader, would locate churches in the rural mountainous areas of Haiti and then send mission teams to those locations for three or four years in a row. By the third year the churches were growing and reaching out to the lost in their own areas. It all happened because short term mission teams were going to the same locations for three to four years in a row.

- **Motivation**

A church-to-church partnership will also motivate the church/association in spiritual growth and ministry. The mission teams will build life-long relationships with the nationals, and they will see first-hand how God can use them in a variety of ministries. The mission team will see God at work growing a non-western church from infancy to maturity. This will motivate the mission team to give to other mission causes in your church/association. There will be a new prayer emphasis in the church/association. The church/association will come alive with evangelism and outreach. Church-to-church partnerships will motivate the church/association to personally get involved in other mission projects.

- **Personalization**

A church-to-church partnership **can help your church** to personalize mission work. Many churches are involved in the giving part of missions, not the going part. They give dollars that help to finance mission endeavors in our state, North America and around the world. Praise the Lord for their involvement! But there is so much more! The greatest need on the mission field is not computers, vehicles, equipment, etc. The greatest need on the mission field is personnel. We need people to go!

When a church/association enters a church-to-church partnership, they personally get to know seasoned missionaries. Most of our churches do not know one missionary personally. Most churches have never had a missionary in their church. When partnering in a church-to-church partnership, the opportunity to personally put a face with a name presents itself. The local church gets to know how missionaries live, act, feel and even what they eat. The mission team gets to personally be involved in ministry. All of a sudden, missions becomes **PERSONAL**.

This kind of partnership also helps churches/associations to build healthy relationships with other believers outside of their Jerusalem. The church/association will get to personally know pastors and laymen from other countries. In order for mission work to be effective, it must have the personal touch of a hands-on ministry. Church-to-church partnerships give churches/associations the long lasting personal touch that is missing in so many mission endeavors.

- **Commission**

A church-to-church partnership helps churches/associations to fulfill every aspect (discipleship, evangelism, teaching, etc.) of the great commission (Matthew 28:19-20). Many mission teams are focused in only one or two areas of ministry. In a church-to-church partnership, they see the national church grow from an infant to maturity. And best of all, the mission team gets to personally help in the growth process. It can bring a sense of fulfillment and purpose to any church/association as they see God working through them. **Your church/association becomes an Acts 1:8 church.**

- **Cooperation**

A church-to-church partnership can create a great spirit of unity as two completely different churches located in two completely different countries using two completely different languages with two completely different cultures are able to work together in complete unity for the Kingdom of God. This is amazing and breathtaking when we think about the lessons we can learn from this.

You and I know churches that will not work together in their own city here in America; yet the cooperation in a church-to-church partnership can be a wonderful experience. It teaches our churches/associations that if we will partner together in unity to reach out to our communities with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, great things can happen.

## **The Barriers of a Church-to-Church Partnership**

There are a few barriers that must be overcome in developing a church-to-church partnership.

- Lack of vision

Being successful in mission work always requires that a church/association have a clear vision of what God's purpose is for the local New Testament Church. Without a clear vision your mission work will not be successful.

Having a clear vision means that the church/association will know **WHERE GOD IS WORKING** and will join HIM there. Having a clear vision is like what a GPS does for an airplane pilot. It points him in the right direction and keeps him from getting off course. No wonder the Bible reminds us "Where there is no vision, the people perish" (Proverbs 29:18).

- Lack of faith

Once you know where God is working, you must then **step out in obedience and do it!** This will require faith! When a church/association has no faith, they cannot move forward in Kingdom Work! Faith is the vehicle that moves us forward in accomplishing God's plans and purposes. The Bible reminds us, "Without faith it is impossible to please God." (Hebrews 11:6a)

- Lack of understanding

When a western church lacks understanding in cross-cultural ministries, it can be more of a hindrance to mission work than a blessing. If our goal is to start a church that looks and acts just like us in a non-western setting, we are in trouble. Partnering with non-western churches means that we are going to understand some of the basic principles of cross-cultural ministry. We will understand that our culture and their culture are entirely different. We must then make the necessary adjustments to minister effectively to them and with them.

The Partnership Missions Department has a lot of resources that can help churches/associations be more effective in mission work and in understanding cross-cultural ministries. Please check out our website at [www.mobaptist.org](http://www.mobaptist.org)

