

BASICS OF PARTNERSHIP

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INTRODUCTION

Partnerships are almost everywhere today. But how many partnerships are working in its true sense? Many enter into partnerships for a mere relationship and fellowship. Many begin partnership with great expectation of achievements, yet ended to a mere relationship and without measurable accomplishments. Many partnerships fail today due to lack of the basic working knowledge of partnership. This paper is written to provide the basic principles of partnership to ensure meaningful partnerships that results into measurable positive outcome among the churches and Christian organizations in North East India. The writer believes and hopes that a thoughtful consideration of the principles laid down in this paper and the application thereof will result into a fruitful partnership that makes a difference.

MEANING OF PARTNERSHIP

Partnership is an old concept rooted in the mind of mankind since the institution of marriage by God in the Garden of Eden. It is also a varied and loosed concept since it is found in the realms of politics, business, social service, and religion. Generally, partnership is defined in terms of each realm and how people connect for their own

interest. Therefore, though there are common factors in all kinds of partnership, the definition of a business partnership does not necessarily work for a true Christian partnership. True Christian partnership is based on oneness in the body of Christ that makes a partnership an imperative, whereas other partnerships are solely based on common interest.

What a Partnership is not:

A partnership is **not** an **association** of various independent bodies with a common interest in mutual encouragement and limited exchange of resources. An association has the widest range of contacts and the smallest sphere of cooperation between the participating bodies.¹ For instance, an association of thirty churches for mutual encouragement and for maintaining the truth of the Bible does not make a partnership.

A partnership is **not** a **service alliance** which is an association in which one supplies resources or services to the other. Service alliances are transactional in nature; focus is on the funds to be provided or the services rendered rather than on building a relationship and sharing a destiny. Foundations, for example, have a vital role in funding ministry programs, but they rarely have intimate partnerships with grant recipients.²

A partnership is **not** a **merger** which is the incorporation of one ministry into another whereby personnel, finances, and programs are integrated into one organization.³

¹ Daniel Rickett, Making your Partnership Work, (Enumclaw: WinePress Publishing, 2002) p.21

² Ibid. p.22

³ Ibid. p.23

Definition of Partnership:

The most commonly accepted definition of Christian partnership is given by Luis Bush and Lorry Lutz as *an association of two or more autonomous bodies who have formed a trusting relationship and fulfill agreed-upon expectations by sharing complementary strengths and resources, to reach their mutual goal.*⁴

The above definition can be highlighted with the following point:

1. A partnership is an **association** (working together) of **two or more autonomous bodies** (not individuals).
2. There must **be mutual trust** between the working partners (bodies).
3. A partnership **fulfills agreed-upon expectations** (each partner contributes to fulfill what is mutually agreed upon).
4. In a partnership there is a **sharing of complementary strengths and resources** (each partner has something to share – man power, skill, money, and other resources).
5. A partnership always strives to reach the **mutual goal** (the result that makes the difference desired by each partner).

BIBLICAL BASIS OF PARTNERSHIP

Basis of Partnership from Philippians:

Partnership is not an option. It is a biblical principle and practice. The biblical basis of true Christian partnership is found in Paul's letter to the Philippians. The numerous

⁴ Luis Bush & Lorry Lutz, Partnering in Ministry, (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1990) p. 46.

occurrence of “joy” and “rejoice” in the epistle of Philippians seemed to stem out of Paul’s introductory statement in 1:4-5, “in all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.” Luis Bush suggests Philippians could be called “a manual on genuine Christian Partnership.” The following is the summary of his carefully gleaned teachings on partnership found in the epistle to the Philippians in relation to his definition of partnership.⁵

1. **The meaning of Christian partnership – an association of two or more autonomous bodies (1:1-11).** The Greek word (koinonia) used for partnership in Philippians can also be translated as “fellowship.” Koinonia is derived from the word “koinonos” which means a “sharer.” Koinonos in turn, is derived from the word “koinos” which means “common.” A koinonia is an association of those who share something in common. In Greek secular usage the word referred to marriage contracts and business relationships – agreements that involved sharing of privileges and responsibilities. In the New Testament the word occurs twenty times and is found more frequently in the book of Philippians than in any other book. Normally, it is translated by the word “fellowship.” Lightfoot comments that this is far more than a friendly atmosphere in a public meeting. The emphasis is joint-participation in an intimate relationship in which there is a common purpose. The word speaks of an association of two or more autonomous bodies.
2. **The goal of Christian partnership – the advance of the Gospel (1:12, 1:5)** A unique partnership had been formed between Paul, the missionary, and the believers who fellowshiped together in Philippi. But Paul rejoiced in partnership not merely because he loved them and enjoyed their care and concern for him personally. He expressed his joy because they had partnered together in the Gospel. This common goal bound them together and kept the partnership working.
3. **The foundation of a genuine Christian partnership – an association of two or more Christian autonomous bodies (1:12-24, 3:21).** The church, which by the time of the Philippian letter was large enough to have elders and deacons, developed a close, caring relationship with Paul.
4. **The philosophy of a genuine Christian partnership – sharing complementary strengths (1:2-11; 2:4-8; 4:21).** Through the sharing of complementary gifts, each partner enables the other to grow each member in the Paul/Philippian relationship wanted the others to grow – to give the others opportunity, capacity, or means to fulfill their mission. Paul also plans to send Timothy to them, to encourage them and enable them to resolve some of their personal difficulties. Paul knows of no one else who will take such a genuine interest in their welfare (2:19-20). Above all, Paul points to the supreme example of Christ who gave

⁵ James H. Kraakevik & Dotsey Welliver, ed. Partners in the Gospel: the strategic role of partnership in world evangelization. (Wheaton: Billy Graham Center), pp.5ff.

Himself completely to enable us to become like Him (3:21). Paul describes Jesus, the model servant, as the Enabler par excellence. From this model we can draw out some principles of enablement which apply to a healthy Christian partnership. As described in Philippians, chapter 2, Jesus shows us that the empowerment of others is a matter of ambition, attitude, and action. First, empowerment involves the ambition to look after the interest of others, not only one's own interest (2:4). Secondly, empowerment is an attitude of ministry which involves thinking of the others as more important than oneself (2:5-8). Thirdly, empowerment is the action involving the giving of oneself for the sake of the partner. Empowerment gives and gives and gives again (2:5-8).

5. **The tangibles in the development of Christian partnerships – a trusting relationship that fulfills agreed-upon expectations by sharing resources (2:12-19; 1:9-10; 4:10-17).** A trust relationship grows out of a properly formed partnership, for the ingredients of confidence are built into the initial understanding of each other's potential, and agreements of what each expects of the other. In a tangible way we might say that Christian partnership involves exchanging information for money. (i) *Sharing the resource of ministry information (2:19, 1:9-10)*. Epaphroditus brought information from the church to Paul, and Timothy took information from Paul to the partner in Philippi. Information is a precious resource. Paul excitedly reports to them that even though he is in prison, he is able to tell people about Christ so that "the whole palace guard" knows why he is there. He wants them to know that their prayers and concern have helped him reach their common goal. In turn, Paul is sending Timothy to them. Paul has no doubt given him a lot of verbal instructions and exhortations for them, but he also wants to find out all the news from Philippi. (ii) *Financial Partnership (4:10-17; 1:7)* In Philippians Paul writes frequently about money. He recognized (as he writes in chapter four) what each Christian partner needs to recognize, that the ultimate source of all supply is God Himself – that He is the Giver.
6. **The intangibles in a genuine Christian partnership form a trusting relationship (2:19-4:7)** Three intangibles in the partnership – suffering, encouragement, and prayer – bonded them in love. These intangibles, rather than the tangible factors, held the structure together, providing the framework that gave the partnership shape. (i) *Partnership in suffering (3:10)*. Paul wanted to know the fellowship of suffering with Christ. He was willing to pay whatever price was required to know and serve Christ fully. And he knew as he suffered, Christ would not forsake him. Every pain helped him to better know and identify with the pains Christ endured for him. When we can fellowship in suffering by helping to alleviate the intensity, or supplying encouragement and fortitude in the pain, it is part of our commitment as partners. (ii) *The partnership of encouragement (2:19-30; 1:14)*. The church had heard of Paul's arrest in Jerusalem and wanted to encourage him. They picked one of their men who was perhaps an elder, named Epaphroditus, and sent him to assist Paul in his needs (2:25). Apart from bringing an offering, Epaphroditus remained with Paul and ministered to him, so much so that he himself became ill (2:25-30). (iii) *Partnering in prayer (4:5-7; 1:3-11; 1:19)*. This passage teaches that close human

relationships and the motivation to pray are intricately interwoven. Paul's prayers for his partners plumbed far greater depths than their personal health and welfare. He prayed that they would love more, learn more about spiritual truth, and gain discernment to make the right choices in their constant upward walk. As in all good partnerships, benefits flow in two directions, Paul assured the Philippians that their prayers had been a great help and encouragement to him and that he believed they would effect his "deliverance." Paul relates three things that were happening because of the partnership in prayer. First, though chained to a soldier day and night in four-hour shifts, the whole palace guard was being touched by his testimony. Secondly, he was comforted knowing that he had two sources of support – Jesus Christ Himself and the prayers of the church (1:19). Thirdly, partner prayers would help Paul himself realize his own goals of speaking the truth in boldness as a privilege and a duty (1:20) and would insure that Christ be honored in his earthly life. One cannot build effective Christian partnerships without regular focused prayer.

Biblical Rationale for Partnerships:

The Scripture envisages partnership as mandate for the people of God to proclaim His glory and to live a godly life. Phil Butler gives five biblical rationales that support partnerships:

First, *God's character is the source of community and cooperation*. Before the world was created, God was living in fellowship with other beings. Because he creates in kind and is always true to himself, it follows that he would create man in his own image – to live and work in relationship, in community.

... So community, relationships, how we operate in the field – these are born out of the character of God. This is not something we learn from secular models (though they frequently confirm the truth). This is not driven by anthropology and sociology but rather by God's character.

Second, Paul gives what I like to call the integrated assets model in Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, and Ephesians 4 – *the body of Christ working as the orchestrated function of all the different, Spirit-inspired parts*. Partnerships allow these varied, God-given elements to consciously function together for Christ's glory.

Third, from Genesis to Revelation *two levels of communication are outlined in Scripture*. From beginning to end we see clearly that there is *individual witness*, exemplified by a legion of personalities. But equally clearly there runs throughout Scripture what I believe to be the primary form of witness – *community witness*.

... In Nehemiah when Israel was being carted off into captivity and brought back, the nations stood in awe. They laughed when Israel was captured and then stood in awe and wondered as God restored the nation. Israel was a community witness to a community of nations. Jesus' high priestly prayer raises the same issue when he suggests that our relationships are the telltale indicator of authenticity to the community around us.

A fourth level of concern in the Scripture mandating partnership is the fact that *the Holy Spirit of God is only released when God's people dwell in unity*. Psalm 133 states that the Holy Spirit of God rests only where God's people dwell in unity.

A fifth Scriptural reason also indicates why partnerships strategies are critical at the grassroots level. Jesus said that the *credibility of the Gospel* is established by how we work together. A large portion of what we actually say is what we do.⁶

There was always something lacking for Adam until God created Eve as his helper/partner. It was not that Adam was weak without his partner. He had the control all over the creatures of God. All the creatures obeyed him, and God was with him. Yet God sensed the need of a partner for Adam. And God did give him a partner. Adam needed Eve not only for procreation, but also for sharing his love, emotions, joy and sorrow. And indeed he needed her as his helper/partner in making decisions and accomplishing goals in their lives.

⁶ Ibid. p. 34-35

ESSENTIAL INGREDIENTS OF A GOOD PARTNERSHIP

There is no perfect partnership of any kind in this world. However, in order to insure a good partnership in ministry, the following points must be taken into consideration seriously.

Common Vision:

No persons come and work together without having a common desire. Vision is important and even necessary in all ministries. The same is true even more importantly in a partnership, simply because the common vision is the driving force that keeps the momentum of a partnership. Common vision is a shared desired result of the partners. All the partners have the same desired results that make the difference in the future from the present in the lives of the target people. Daniel Rickett calls it “shared vision.”⁷ It is vital because it directs and guides a partnership towards the goal. It explains the purpose and need of the partnership. It always keeps the focus clear.

An individual minister or an organization may change their vision and still continue their ministry, but when any one of the partners loses its vision the partnership fails. Partners need to make sure if each has the common vision. Often vision is confused with interest or a mere wish. When a person hears a story from a mission field, it may arouse interest and he wishes that he could do something. That is not vision. A vision is the passion that continually motivates a man to accomplish his desired goal having the faith that God will

⁷ Daniel Rickett, Making Your Partnership Work, p.30

help him to achieve it. The way that a person gets a vision may be different from how another does. But most importantly, one should understand that a vision is born, not transferred or transplanted. Keith Fraser-Smith, a founding member of the Strategic Evangelism Partnership rightly says in this regard.

Vision cannot be transferred. It must be birthed. The North American church has historically used stories and a variety of visual aids to stimulate vision in the church. This form of stimulation does not build vision. It simply arouses interest and expectations that cannot be fulfilled without field exposure. Therefore an experienced-based pathway needs to be created by the church through which vision can be birthed. Once vision is birthed in the hearts of some members through short-term field exposure, then each of these people can influence ten more to seek out a similar learning experience. Missions committees need to incorporate short-term trips as part of their effort to facilitate vision in the local church.⁸

Often people partner without having a common and real vision. They start a partnership because they have resources, but no vision. It naturally leads to failure. A person may propose another to start a project in partnership because he has resources. The second person is excited and he agrees because he thinks he can carry out the work because he sees the resources. But he is easily discouraged when difficult time comes because he has no vision. Vision enables a man to persevere and get through difficulties and troubles in ministry. Vision enables a man to see his desired results through hindrances and difficulties. A man without vision easily quits. In a partnership each partner needs to have a common vision to sustain the partnership.

Common Doctrine:

Before anyone enters into a partnership he must ask the question “With whom do I partner?” The question “Why partnership?” comes only when the first one has been

⁸ James H. Kraakevik & Dotsey Welliver, ed. P. 61

answered. Two persons with different faith cannot walk together. On the other hand, individuals differ in their own beliefs even among the same denominations. No individual agrees with another in every single aspect of doctrinal issues. Luis Bush and Lorry Lutz cite an illustration of a man who tried to find in vain a church that agrees with all his ninety-nine doctrinal points.

Richard taught a Bible class in his local church. His job allowed him to study while working, and since he was an avid reader, he enjoyed digging up every nuance of Greek meanings and background information of the passage.

Unfortunately Richard became very dogmatic about many aspects of biblical application, and began feeling uncomfortable with the pastor's teaching and the church's position on a number of questions.

He sat down and made a list of ninety-nine doctrinal points which he felt were essential if he were to continue having fellowship in the church. Though the elders agreed with most of his points, in fact all the essential ones, there were certain areas of disagreement. So, armed with his list, Richard left the church to find one that preached "the truth." Not surprisingly, after a few years of fruitless searching, Richard is back, finally willing to admit that no church could meet all his requirements.⁹

Some Christians cannot comfortably associate with the people who differ even in non-foundational truths. It is essential that one maintains one's own identity in faith while respecting some one else's belief. However, not compromising one's faith, there is a need of adjustment to work together with someone in partnership. Daniel Rickett writes about this adjustment.

At the very minimum, fundamental beliefs, values, and aspirations should be in the same universe. Partners must have the same convictions about God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, the gospel, and the Bible. Major differences cannot be glossed over. They will eventually surface and may put the whole partnership at risk. It is important to identify differences early on and to assess their potential impact on the partnership. On the other hand, it's not helpful to scrutinize theological positions too closely. There will surely be differences that merit debate. In such matters the old axiom applies: Unity in primary things, liberty in the secondary,

⁹ Luis Bush & Lorry Lutz, Partnering in Ministry pp. 46-47

and charity in all things. It is important to be completely clear with each other about the primary things.¹⁰

The following principles may be suggested in this regard:

1. *Do not partner with unbelievers:* “Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? (2 Cor.6: 14 NIV). If someone believes that people who belong to a particular denomination (though they bear the name ‘Christians’) are unbelievers due to their serious heretical teachings on soteriology and Christology, he must not partner with them.
2. *Make certain the partners have common sound doctrine on foundational truths:* The partners must agree in common on the foundational teachings of the Bible on God, Jesus Christ, Holy Spirit, salvation by faith, the Bible, the Gospel, etc. The difference of opinion on the covering of head by women in the church, the identity of wine in the Lord’s Supper, literal or spiritual application on washing of feet, which are non-foundational, should not be a hindrance in partnership.
3. *No partner must have hidden agenda to impose his faith and practice:* It must be spelled out clearly in the partnership agreement that no partner should impose or try to impose his faith, practice and philosophy on his partner. The practical difficulties that may come up in the course of partnership must be foreseen and clarified in the agreement.
4. *Focus on the purpose and goal of partnership:* The partners need to focus on the purpose and the goal of their partnership. What is the desired goal expected to happen in the near or far future in the lives of the target group because of the

¹⁰ Daniel Rickett, Making Your Partnership Work pp. 35-36

partnership? Never question the doctrinal stand of your partner once the partnership begins and once you know you have common in foundational teachings.

5. *Make adjustment by written agreement on important practices of faith and philosophy:* There are several teachings and practices, which are non-foundational, yet important in one's conviction, such as, mode of baptism, woman pastor in a church, etc. Though the partners have common doctrine in foundational teachings, confusion and misunderstanding may arise among the partners in the process of partnership on these important practices. Suppose, two churches enter into a partnership to plant churches in a particular mission field. The first church practices both sprinkling and immersion as the mode of baptism and also believes in the practice of woman pastor in the church. The second church practices only immersion as the biblical mode of baptism and does not believe in the practice of woman pastor in the church. In the course of time, people came to Christ and the need of a church emerged. Each of the partnering church may try to impose their own practice if there is no written agreement on the practical issues. As long as there is a clear written partnership agreement on such issues, there is no problem in partnering with a different denomination having a common doctrine on foundational teachings. There is always a possibility of adjustment in such cases because both the churches agree in baptism by way of immersion and appointment of male pastor in a church. They can write up their agreement to that effect. Taking another supposition, an organization that involves in Bible translation enters into partnership with a church organization

that belongs to a denomination different from that of the first. They agree to take up the language project for translation from the mission field of the church organization. The desire and the goal of both the parties are to provide the Scriptures to the people in the mission field by sharing their resources. The second party has no problem with the translation policy of the first party. As long as they have common doctrine on the foundational truths, have no hidden agenda, and have clearly spelled out written agreement, the partnership is at no risk.

Attitude of Equality:

This is one of the most important aspects to sustain a good partnering relationship. Many understand equality in partnership to be the equal sharing of resources, which seems to be impossible, for God does not equally distribute the gifts, talents and resources to all the people. Luis Bush and Lorry Lutz clearly explain the meaning of equality in partnership:

To some, partnership resembles the famous “safari stew” which calls for equal parts of elephant and rabbit: one elephant and one rabbit.

Equal partnership seems impossible since the West with its resources of money, technology, personnel and training is represented by the elephant. How can a Third-World church or agency feel equal with such a behemoth for a partner?

Yet the cry for equality is repeated almost without exception whenever Third-World leaders are asked about partnership. Neither side seems to understand the true meaning of equality. The West considers itself as “having arrived” in relation to its “developing” partners. Two-Third World Christians feel inferior, with little to offer, or so they think.

The problem lies with our understanding of equality, which has little to do with size, amount of resources or power. Rather, equality has everything to do with attitudes, values and status. Unfortunately we place an extremely high value on tangibles like money, education and technology. But the Scripture places little value on these. In fact, rather than being a value, money becomes simply a tool at best and a temptation at worst.¹¹

¹¹ Luis Bush & Lorry Lutz, Partnering in Ministry p.48

The sense of equality in a true partnership is also revealed by the answer to the question “Why partnership?” In a true partnership, each partner has something to contribute. Otherwise a true partnership does not take place. This contribution should not be measured only in terms of money. When a mission agency of the West enters into a virgin land in a particular place in the East, and starts the mission work by itself, a partnership does not take place in spite of the fact of some hospitality shown by the local people. For a partnership is an association of two or more autonomous bodies. But when the mission agency of the West associates with a body in the East to work together to achieve a common goal, partnership takes place. But why partnership? There is a partnership because both feel the need of one another to accomplish the common goal more effectively. The first partner has the finance and education; the second party can provide the manpower, language, cultural knowledge, legal advice, accommodations and probably part of the finance.

A ministry in a poor country may be crippled when the monetary flow is stopped from the West. Similarly, the ministry may be stopped when the nationals do not participate and refused to cooperate. Then a question comes, “Who is the loser?” No one is the loser, and no one is the gainer. At the same time, both are losers, because God’s work is hindered. When a partnership takes place, there is always a common goal and common desire, which the partners want to see in the target group. This “target group” is the third party wherever they are. They are no less or more important to any of the partners. The partners have the common goal and common vision for the “target group.”

An attitude of equality demands that partners respect one another. Intentional or unintentional disrespect is an unhealthy sign in partnership. Luis Bush and Lorry Lutz again have some practical information in this regard:

An attitude of equality requires that partners respect each other, listen to each other, learn from each other and trust each other. A national leader complained to his partner agency in North America, “We listen; we follow. That’s not partnership.”

Unintentionally Western churches sometimes treat great national Christian leaders disrespectfully. Nationals participated in the missions conference of a large church. In their own countries these Christian leaders directed large seminaries, served as heads of denominations and spoke at international congresses. But they complained that the missions conference made a spectacle of them. Asked to appear in “native costume” (which they never wear at home), they were given only ten minutes to tell a dramatic shocking story and to summarize the impact of their ministry.

While Western partners need to continue to develop respect for and acceptance of their Third-World partners, these partners must also grow in their respect and acceptance of Western values such as the need for careful reporting and regular accounting.¹²

Respect is necessary in order to keep the partner’s dignity. When the dignity of a partner is lost, he acts as a hired servant would, not as an owner with the sense of responsibility. This is an unhealthy sign of partnership.

Cultural Understanding:

Intercultural understanding is important in a partnering relationship in order to avoid misunderstanding and disputes. Every country has its own distinct cultures. There are cultures within culture of a country. In a country like India, there are distinct cultures for every state and every group of people. The understanding and appreciation of one’s

¹² Ibid. p. 50

partner's culture does not mean to endorse all cultural norms and expressions. For culture is a mixture of good and evil. However, understanding is important to avoid misunderstanding and to communicate better in order to maintain a good relationship. The purpose of intercultural understanding, as Rickett says, is "not to become like the host culture, but to communicate with a minimum of distortion and have the ability to honor your relationships and obligations."¹³ What is culture? Probably, the most comprehensive definition of culture is the one given in the "Willowbank Report – Gospel and Culture" published by *Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization* in its Lausanne Occasional Papers No.2. Daniel Rickett quotes the definition:

Culture is an integrated system of beliefs (about God or reality or ultimate meaning), of values (about what is true, good, beautiful and normative), of customs (how to behave, relate to others, talk, pray, dress, work, play, trade, farm, eat, etc.), and of institutions which express these beliefs, values and customs (government, law courts, temples or churches, family, schools, hospitals, factories, shops, unions, clubs, etc.), which binds a society together and gives it a sense of identity, dignity, security, and continuity.¹⁴

Learning and understanding a different culture takes time and it is not always easy. Rickett suggests three ways to build intercultural understanding, which are necessary to reduce cross-cultural uncertainties.

1. **Learn culture.** This includes knowledge of your own culture as well as the host culture. Unless you become aware of your own cultural frame of reference, you will not be able to understand why you react toward another culture in the way that you do. Learning the host culture includes not only reading about general cultural patterns, but also observing and inquiring about what you see. By taking the role of a learner in the host culture, you'll also be winning friends and building relationships.
2. **Build relationships.** Genuine Christian ministry is inconceivable without meaningful relationships, and progress in building relationships comes

¹³ Daniel Rickett, *Making Your Partnership Work*, p. 71

¹⁴ *Ibid*, p.68

through spending time with people, sharing your stories, exploring differences, and taking on tasks together. It is in building the relationship that you will encounter differences. When you do, discuss them face to face. In this way you will build trust and mutual understanding.

3. **Understand yourself.** Although it's often overlooked, people who understand their own social style and personal tendencies are better equipped to adjust to cultural differences. By understanding themselves, they are able to anticipate their own response to cultural differences.¹⁵

Partners need to learn and understand how, in a different culture, the decisions are made, opinions are expressed, the leadership style differs, and the mode of reporting financial accountability operates. These are the areas where serious negative consequences often occur in a partnership.

Open Communication:

Communication is the basis of relationship. Relationship is the basis of partnership. A good partnership is based on open communication. Communication clears off the tensions and misunderstandings thereby building a good partnership.

Communication through personal contacts visiting the ministry fields and families helps the partners to share the success and failures more easily and in a more realistic way. Often a partner is reluctant to express fully in writing, specially relating to opinions on sensitive matters. Personal contact is necessary in regular basis. Partners who work side by side have a great advantage over the ones who are separated by the geographical distance. Face to face meetings are irreplaceable by letters, e-mail, and fax. It is difficult to express fully the emphasis on a point, the interest, and the attention to a partner

¹⁵ Daniel Rickett, Evangelical Missions Quarterly, vol.37. No.3

without the benefit of non-verbal behavior.¹⁶ However, since personal contacts are not always possible, the non-verbal communication must be seriously considered. The following advices are important to remember in order to maintain a good partnering relationship.

1. Keeping the desired goal in mind, communicate on regular basis on the partnership project.
2. Make regular spot visits and personal contact.
3. Communicate the facts, not the assumption and implications of the facts.
4. Do not be hurry in communicating your personal opinion.
5. Communicate clearly the accounts of the partnership project.
6. Communicate your expectations according to the partnership agreement.
7. Communicate your apology in case of any failure on your part.

Transparent financial policies:

Often the relationship in partnership is clouded and confused due to the lack of a transparent financial policy. The partner who contributes the major portion of the finances tends to assume the position of power and dictates the partnership. On the other hand, the partner who receives the fund tends to throw away his right of equality and express his opinion. This is the weakness of both the parties. Money is often over-valued, and it creates disproportionate place in partnership. It must be always remembered that money is just one of the instruments to achieve the common goal of the partners. Since money can be a potential source of misunderstanding and dispute in any kind of

¹⁶ Daniel Rickett, Making Your Partnership Work, p.56

relationship, a clear and wise financial policy is necessary. Here are some principles for making a financial policy:

1. God is the ultimate source: Partners must recognize that the ultimate source of all supply is God himself, and he is the Giver. In his own purpose and wisdom God has chosen to bless some individuals and organizations with more funds, and he holds them responsible as channels for his work. Ownership does not rest with the steward. The partners who receive the fund receive it from God in answer to their prayer to be used according to his will. No doubt, this does not excuse them from being accountable.¹⁷
2. Practice of trust and communication on funding policies: When the accountability on the use of fund and the regular report thereof is necessary, the practice of trust to one another is extremely important. Moreover, the trust is gradually built up on the knowledge of good stewardship. Partners need to communicate clearly the practical difficulties and requirements on raising funds, such as, the expectations of the donors. The legal complications of sending and receiving of fund need to be discussed.
3. Use of fund according to its designation: While exercising the freedom of the use of a section of fund through a local body, the designated fund must be spent for the purpose it is sent. Receiving partners should respect the intention and the desire of the donors.
4. Understanding the value of other contributions: Partners must understand the value of other contributions, such as, manpower, skill, accommodation, etc. in

¹⁷ Luis Bush & Lorry Lutz, Partnering in Ministry, p.58ff.

order to diffuse the one-sided power. Money at the best is one of the resources to achieve the ministry goal, and at the worst it is the source to spoil people.

Mutual accountability:

Accountability is indispensable in partnership. Trust and accountability are two ends of a pole. “It is difficult to trust anyone who is unwilling to be accountable; however it is also humiliating to be accountable to someone who does not trust us.”¹⁸ Accountability does not imply mistrust. Some Christian leaders are against accountability. They are offended when they are asked to give account of the ministry and their financial dealing. There are two reasons for this. Either they have misused the fund or they think others do not trust them. It results into non-cooperation from their colleagues and gradual break away of the partnership.

Naturally donors want to know whether the fund is properly used. This curiosity is answered by good accountability. Trust is gradually built up by accountability. Even after the trust is fully built up, still accountability is to be continued. If a person is faithful in his work and clean in his financial dealing, accountability is a matter of enjoyment for a Christian leader.

Accountability is biblical. As Paul travels, he collects offerings from the churches for the poor people. He recognizes the need of accountability when he writes, “We want to avoid any criticism of the way we administer this liberal gift. For we are taking pains to do what is right, not only in the eyes of the Lord but also in the eyes of men” (2 Cor.8:20-

¹⁸ Luis Bush & Lorry Lutz, Partnering in Ministry, p.56s

21). Who can question and disprove the integrity of Paul? Yet he is glad that Titus was chosen by the churches to accompany with him as they carry the offering (2 Cor.8:19).

Partners of both sides are accountable for the promises they have made to each other. Accountability is not the report of success. It is the information of the fact that the partners are walking faithfully towards the goal they have committed to achieve. Accountability does not only helps partners to maintain trust, but gives opportunity for rejoicing in God's work and his abundant provision.

Demonstrating financial integrity in partnership is a great challenge. Suspicion in financial integrity is a major setback in partnership. The following are some guidelines for maintaining financial accountability.

1. Let the receiving partner know how the fund is raised, and the expectation of the donors.
2. Send funds to organizations, not to individuals.
3. Send funds for designated purpose as per the previous agreement.
4. Send a copy of audited financial report annually to the partner.
5. Raise funds only for approved projects.
6. Clarify as to who should serve as the contact with the donor.
7. Have time to look at together the physical achievement of the projects.

Mutual Trust:

Trust, unlike faith, is based on what is seen. As a partner fulfills his partner's expectation in the process of partnership, the trust is being built on. A partnership begins with some amount of trust, which will be increased or decreased as the partners fulfill or fail to meet their expectations they have from each other. Daniel Rickett is perfectly right when he says trust is composed of expectations.

... partnership is about managing expectations. If you manage them well, you will simultaneously build trust because trust is composed of expectations – more precisely, the *positive* expectations we have of others. Simply stated, we trust those who meet our expectations. We assume they will act in ways consistent with our interests. In contrast, distrust arises when those on whom we depend appear unwilling or unable to meet our expectations.¹⁹

Therefore, there are levels of trust. The partners need to work to heighten the level of trust by fulfilling the expectations they have from each other. A fruitful partnership is attained by such trust.

There are also kinds of trust. Rickett mentions the findings of William Berguist and colleagues after a study of sixty-five partnerships.

... three kinds of trust in a partnership: trust in intentions, trust in competency, and trust in perspectives. We trust people when we are convinced they are interested in our well-being or in the well-being of the ministry in which we are involved together. We trust people when they demonstrate they have the capacity to benefit us our ministry. We are also inclined to trust people who share our perspectives and see the world in the same way we do. By contrast, we don't trust people who act in ways that don't seem to be in our best interests. Trust erodes when people prove incompetent or powerless to fulfill the expectations we have of them. And most of us find it hard to trust people who do not share our basic beliefs and values.²⁰

¹⁹ Daniel Rickett, Making Your Partnership Work, p.76

²⁰ Ibid, p.77

All these three kinds of trust – intentions, competency, and perspectives – are necessary in partnership. Relationship is important in partnership. But achievement, not relationship, is the goal of partnership. These three kinds of trust are vital in order to achieve the goal of a partnership. Partnership begins with trust, yet trust is continually built up throughout the life of a partnership.

Accomplishment:

What is the ultimate goal of a partnership? Partnership is not an end in itself. It has a goal, a mutual goal for which the partners are striving. Has the partnership achieved that goal? A partnership without a measurable accomplishment in consistent with the goal mutually set in the beginning is a failure and need to be reviewed. It must have what Daniel Rickett calls “meaningful results.” It is the outcome or the effect produced by the joint effort of the partners. Often partners feel that the partnership is going on well because there is a good relationship. However, the success of partnership is not measured by the emotional relationship of the partners. It is measured by the accomplishments because of the partnership. There are basically four criteria to assess the accomplishment.

1. Comparison of the past and present: Partners surely know the differences seen in the lives of the target group as they constantly compare the past and present.
2. Co-creation: The accomplishments are due to the joint efforts of the partners. They are greater than either partner could have achieved alone.
3. Balanced benefits: Partnership benefits the partners in proportion with their contribution.

4. Strategic results: The accomplishments confirm the vision and values of partnership.

Accomplishments could be either quantitative or qualitative or both. Counting the quantitative results is important to assess the partnership accomplishments while the qualitative results are to be simply recognized. However, partners need to understand that ultimate success is measured by God's yardstick. Man's measurements are merely a clouded picture of how God measures.

Documentation:

Few are not in favor of documentation thinking that it implies mistrust and thereby affects relationship. However, documentation is necessary and important for several reasons. Rickett gives four benefits of documentation.

1. History – Documents and records collected over time tell a story. A contextually rich supply of data can yield valuable lessons.
2. Memory – Without documentation it is easy to forget the facts you once knew. Written records are more likely to provide an accurate snapshot of the way things were, and an objective point of reference for resolving conflicts.
3. Currency – Timely, informative data keeps everybody on the same page. When data is kept current, partners know where they are at any given time because they are working with the same information.
4. Measurement – Appropriate records allow you to compare the present experience to past expectations. ... the chief means to measuring results is comparison.²¹

The following are the suggested model of *Partnership Agreement* and *Project Agreement* for Bibles International India Society. Partnership Agreement is, by nature, a long-term agreement. It continues even after a particular project is completed, and look forward for

²¹ Daniel Rickett, *Making Your Partnership Work*, pp. 99ff.

the next project. Project Agreement is the agreement for a particular project. It concerns with the details of the contributions of the partners, duration of the project, and the practical aspects of the partnership.

PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT
(A Model)

This Partnership Agreement is made on this day of July 18, 2002 between Bibles International India Society, P.O. Box 55, Court Road, Silchar – 788001, Assam, India represented by its Chairman, (hereinafter referred to as BIIS), and Kailashahar Baptist Christian Association, Darchawi, P.O. Kumarghat, North Tripura, India, represented by its Executive Secretary (hereinafter referred to as KBCA).

The parties hereby enter into a working relationship through partnership to work cooperatively for the expansion of the kingdom and agree to abide by the following terms and conditions:

1. BIIS will serve as the Bible translation society for KBCA. Any Bible translation or literacy program for KBCA, whether from the language groups of its mission fields or any other languages which KBCA feels the need of translation, will be taken up by BIIS.
2. Any language projects for translation shall have to be approved by BIIS according to its rules made for the purpose.

3. BIIS and KBCA will make joint efforts to ensure the acceptance of the translation product by the majority of the Christian community of the language group.
4. BIIS will provide the skilled resources for the consultation of the translation, and training for the translators.
5. The expenses towards a translation project, such as, translator's salary, traveling expenses for the translators for the workshops, accommodation and food expenses for the translators during the workshops, stationeries, providing computers for the translators, and printing will be borne by both the parties according to the mutual written agreement to be signed for each language project at the time of the approval of the project.
6. BIIS retains the right to control the quality of the translations.
7. The copyright of the translation belongs to BIIS.
8. KBCA will assist the translators and the language group to form a Read & Review Committee to check the readability of the translation and ensure the proper function of the committee. BIIS will provide technical guidelines for the formation of the committee.
9. KBCA will make a financial contribution every year towards the general expenses of the ministry of BIIS of an amount determined by it or collected from its churches.
10. Both the parties are fully committed to one another to exchange resources and conduct seminars, meetings, conference, gospel camps, etc. for mutual spiritual encouragement, and mutual growth in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

11. BIIS will give to KBCA a yearly update of the project(s) and report of the fund received from the latter and the expenses incurred in the translation project(s) of KBCA.
12. Both the parties are committed to one another to retain the partnering relationship until and unless there is a serious difference in doctrine and translation policy that might come up in future.
13. In any case, both the parties will retain the partnering relationship as long as there is a pending project on the basis of the terms and conditions mutually agreed upon at the beginning of the project.
14. Both the parties are committed to pray for one another and to mutual trust and accountability.
15. BIIS representatives will visit KBCA churches to promote its work and build better relationship with the churches to strengthen the partnership.
16. This working agreement is subject to review at any time by both the parties.

In witness whereof and in token of acceptance of the terms and conditions of this Agreement, the parties herewith put their signatures on the day, month and year mentioned at the outset of this agreement.

Signature of the Chairman of BIIS

Signature of the Executive Secretary of KBCA

PROJECT AGREEMENT

This Project Agreement is made on this day of July 22, 2002 between Bibles International India Society, Court Road, Silchar-788001, Assam, India, represented by its Director (hereinafter referred to as BIIS) **and** Baptist Church of Mizoram, P.O. Serkawn, Lunglei, Mizoram, represented by its Director of Missions (hereinafter referred to as BCM).

In pursuance of the Partnership Agreement dated July 1, 2002 between BIIS and BCM, and also in consideration of the acute need of a Scripture for the Apatani people, the parties hereby agree to take up a New Testament translation project for Apatani of Arunachal Pradesh under the following terms and conditions:

1. The project will begin from August 1, 2002. Both the parties will cooperate one another to complete the project in July 2008.
2. The contact person for BCM in relation to this project will be the missionary of BCM among the Apatanis in Arunachal Pradesh or any person authorized by BCM for the purpose. However, correspondence on detail technical matters on translation can be done directly to the translators.
3. BCM will select two Apatani translators for the translation work, and it will bear their monthly allowance/salary and their traveling expenses for the workshops.

4. BCM will be responsible to form a Read and Review Committee, consisting of at least 80% of the Apatani speaking people including the translators, to be met on a regular basis to check the readability of the translation.
5. The regular workshop place for the checking the translation will be in the office of BIIS at Silchar, or any other place mutually decided by the consultant, translators and the contact person of BCM.
6. BIIS will bear the expenses for food and lodging for the translators during the workshops if the workshops are held in Silchar.
7. BIIS will provide the resources for translation checking and necessary seminars and training sessions for the translations from time to time.
8. The consultant(s) of BIIS will be the final authority for quality control of the translation.
9. 1000 copies of Gospel of John will be printed in the second year of the project.
10. 70% of the cost of printing (Gospel of John and NT) will be borne by BCM. All the copies except few for reference for BIIS office will be dispatched to BCM at the expense of the latter. BIIS will not charge from BCM for the printed copies.
11. The copyright of the translation belongs to BIIS.
12. The BIIS consultant will inform the translators and the contact person of BCM well ahead of time the schedule for workshops. BCM will ensure the timely attendance of the translators for the workshops and completion of their assignments assigned by the consultants.
13. The translators who have not attended the translation training are not allowed to attend the workshops.

14. The above-mentioned terms and conditions are subject to review and changes.

Signature of BIIS Director

Signature of Director of Missions

(For BIIS)

(For BCM)

PARTNERSHIP OBSTACLES

Obstacles to Partnership:

There are obstacles to partnership that might hinder in building a partnering relationship.

The awareness of these obstacles and prayerful handling of the similar situations will definitely help any given groups of people or churches to build a working partnership.

Luis Bush and Lorry Lutz mention six obstacles of which the following three are amazingly important.

1. *Western missions have had to work through their own ethnocentricity.* The belief that “West is best” blinded us to the values found in other cultures and to the realization that the truth of Scripture can be adapted to each culture, allowing each people to develop its own forms of worship and lifestyle.
2. *The overpowering resources of the West developed a donor mentality.* Western churches have been guilty of showering money and personnel on the national churches without thinking through potentially negative results.

For example, a young African missionary spoke in American churches, presenting the church-planting ministry of his denomination in an unreached area of his country. He vividly described the difficulties of travel – walking, or riding a bicycle for many miles under the burning sun. Christians listened sympathetically and responded impulsively, offering to purchase a motorcycle for him.

However, these generous donors had not taken the time to find out that the young missionary's older colleague back on the field walked just as far as and with more difficulty because of health problems. He had asked the church leaders for transportation, and they were trying to find ways to fund his request. It's easy to understand the resentment and bitterness he felt when his junior, who'd been selected to go to the United States because of his fluency in English, had come back with a motorcycle.

The unthinking donors had not only unwittingly caused jealousy between workers, but usurped the church's role in making decisions about its missionaries' requests. Partnership would have avoided such pitfalls, but mentally to give emotionally and personally often bypasses partnership agreements.

3. *The Two-Thirds World church became a prisoner of history.* Though Two-Thirds World church leaders recognized how the controls and the resource power of the West had weakened the church, many could not let go, afraid to give up the security of outside funding.

David Bosch, professor of missiology at the University of South Africa, draws an analogy from African farmers who set traps to catch baboons who are destroying their crops. They cut a hole in the top of a pumpkin just large enough for the baboon's hand to squeeze in. The baboon reaches in to get the delicious seeds, but is unable to get his clenched fist back out through the hole. It sits there helplessly, a prisoner of the pumpkin until the farmer comes to shoot it. It never realizes that all it has to do is to let go of the seeds!

In order to keep the money and free mission personnel, national churches publicly accepted the dominance and control of the West, while in their own circles hotly complaining about paternalism.²²

Though the facts mentioned by Luis Bush and Lorry Lutz are in the context of international partnership (between the West and the other nationals), the principles are true within the national itself. Some Christian communities in India think they are the best. It has blinded the values of other cultures, trying to impose their culture and lifestyles as they spread the Gospel to other groups.

Obstacles in Partnership:

No partnership is free from obstacles and difficulties. Knowingly or unknowingly, partners make mistakes hindering the growth in a partnering relationship. Daniel Rickett

²² Luis Bush & Lorry Lutz, Partnering in Ministry, p.37ff.

gives seven mistakes partners commonly make along with remedies, the awareness of which will enable a partner to avoid the mistakes more easily.²³

Mistake # 1 – Assumption that partners think alike.

Often partners think that they think alike when in reality one expects more than the other think. This is one of the quickest ways to get into trouble in partnership. Partners take many things granted without making the boundaries and the partners' roles clear.

Remedies:

1. Use guidelines.
2. Have regular discussions.
3. Inform your partner quickly.
4. Ask for your partner's opinion.
5. Send short notes.
6. Relax together for more intimacy.

Mistake # 2 – Promising more than you can deliver.

This is a mistake made not only by a novice, but also often by experienced missionaries.

Partners often promise to deliver more, overestimating their abilities.

Remedies:

Make sure to under-promise and over deliver. On the one hand, you should stick to what you do best. Take on only those projects that are within your grasp. If the margin of success is slim one can take one of these three approaches: (1) make your apology and back out; (2) recommend someone else who is better suited to help; or (3) under-promise what you think you can deliver.

²³ Daniel Rickett, *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, Vol.37, No.3

Mistake # 3 – Taking to the road without a map.

It is normal for partnerships to start with ambiguity, misunderstandings, and disagreement. A partnership is necessarily untidy as people negotiate values and interests. It is abnormal when major misconceptions emerge late in the relationship. This happens generally for one of two reasons. Either the partners did not clarify goals for the partnership at the outset, or they neglected to review and recalibrate their goals along the way.

Remedies:

Establish goals that make a difference. Establish goals for the relationship as well as for ministry impact. Even when the partner ministry as a whole has clearly stated goals, the partnership must also have goals. Other goals are also needed to hold the partnership together and keep in moving in the right direction. Merely stating the goals is not enough. In partnering they must be the kind of goals that make a difference.

Mistake # 4 – Underestimating cultural differences.

Succeeding at intercultural partnership requires at a minimum some understanding of the world-view, ways of being, and interacting, used by members of the partner ministry. It is easy to underestimate cultural differences, especially where there are strong similarities.

Remedy:

Build intercultural understanding. Anticipate cultural issues. That involves understanding not only the host culture but also your own culture. Being aware of how your assumptions, values, and beliefs are culturally construed has as much, if not more, to do with intercultural effectiveness than knowledge of the host culture.

Mistake # 5 – Taking shortcuts.

Often partners make mistake in taking the short cuts, not thoroughly evaluating, checking and going through the accountability factors. It gives room for deception and fraud.

Remedies:

Develop evaluation procedures and use them. Establish procedures for investigating new ministries and maintaining accountability with current partners. Look at a ministry through the following six lenses:

1. Study the priorities of the ministry and compare it to other Christian ministries in the area.
2. Look for agreement in basic doctrinal positions.
3. Check out the ministry's reputation and relationship with local churches and other bodies of evangelical Christians.
4. Examine the ministry's financial situation and support base.
5. Identify specific goals and objectives of the ministry.
6. Analyze the structure and quality of the board of directors.

Mistake # 6 – Forgetting to develop self-reliance.

Self-reliance is undermined when one partner unilaterally interferes in the administration of the other, when a partner is handicapped in its relationship with local Christian bodies, or when one partner cannot survive without the other. Effective complementary partnership can only be achieved by truly independent organizations. The question of self-reliance comes with the flow of money. The greater the proportion of funding from a single source, the less self-reliant the organization becomes.

Remedy:

Include self-reliance in your goals for the partnership. A good rule of thumb is to provide no more than 30 percent of the partner's total income. A ministry that receives 70 percent of its support from local sources represents a healthy level of interdependence. Admittedly this is not always possible. The point is to be aware of the impact and work purposefully toward a realistic target. From time to time ask each other a series of questions:

1. In what way is the ministry stronger and more effective than when you entered into partnership?
2. What would happen if you were to dissolve the partnership today? Would the partner be destroyed, crippled for life, or handicapped for a while? What would it take for the partner to recover?

Mistake # 7 – Running a race with no end.

The easiest mistake to make in a successful partnership is to keep going with no end in sight. Long-term partnerships tend to make this mistake more than short-term, functional partnership. Short-term partnerships are by definition, goal-driven. When the goal is achieved the partnership is dissolved.

Remedies:

Have an exit plan before you start.

CONCLUSION

Partnership is not an option, but a mandate. We are called to partner with God and in God's work. Ministry goals are achieved faster and better through partnership. But there must be good reasons for partnership before anyone enters into a partnership. Many partnerships end up with no accomplishments, because the partners do not have common vision. In a true partnership, both the partners have something to contribute to achieve the common goal. The contribution of a partner should not be measured in terms of money. A good relationship is important in a partnership, but it is not the end of partnership. A successful partnership is always measured in terms of measurable achievements which is accomplished better and faster than a single partner could have. Yet it is true that ultimately a meaningful result is measured with God's yardstick. Financial accountability and mutual trust play an important role in sustaining a successful partnership. Documentation of a partnership agreement and the details of a project agreement help the partners to compare the outcome between past and present and to focus on the original goals of the partnership.

There may be difficulties and misunderstandings in a partnership, for no partnership is perfect. But partnership is a divine design. A prayerful beginning with a definite common vision with faithfulness in fulfilling the expectations of the partners will result into great accomplishments that glorify God.

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