

The Missions Revolution Most Churches Are Missing

By Bob Young

Note: Thom Rainer recently wrote about “the bi-vocational revolution most churches are missing.” A link to his article appears below.

A mission revolution is taking place in our generation, and few church leaders and members are aware of it. This mission revolution is not unlike the bi-vocational ministry shift that Rainer describes. The mission revolution depends less and less on full-time supported North American missionaries and focuses rather on training and facilitating the work of national vocational and bi-vocational workers.

Many successful mission churches depend on vocational national workers

For the last dozen years, I have traveled across Latin America, working with dozens of churches to develop healthy churches, spiritually mature, self-directed and self-supporting, missionary churches capable of planting more churches in their own countries. Many of these churches do not have fully-supported ministers. Many do not depend on a supporting church in the U.S. And many of the churches that are growing and multiplying most rapidly depend on vocational or bi-vocational national workers.

A dozen years ago, I sometimes felt like “a voice crying in the wilderness.” Only a few were advocating for training national vocational workers. Today, I hear a chorus of voices calling the church to consider the possibilities of vocational missions. Rainer writes about the increasing number of bi-vocational church workers in the U.S. The same thing is occurring in the mission field, perhaps at an even more rapid pace than in the U.S. Several factors suggest that the trend will accelerate.

What does vocational mission work look like?

A vocational national worker does not depend on the church for income; a bi-vocational worker may receive some limited support from the local church. Vocational workers have their own employment (as is the case for all of the students in the online Tijuana School of Preaching where I recently taught a course in the Thessalonian Letters). None of those students receive financial support for their work in the church. My mission work with vocational church workers involves training members, workers, and leaders—in evangelism, discipleship, and spiritual growth.

What should the U.S. church be doing now?

It is time for the church and its leaders to begin thinking through the implications of the revolution in vocational mission work that focuses on national workers. The shift will not be immediate, but it is time to ask about next steps. How are national workers trained? How are necessary working resources provided? How is communication facilitated? What are the next expectations for church growth and church planting? It is time to ask fresh questions and to rethink the existing “sending” model used by many churches. It is time to provide resources for vocational and bi-vocational national workers. It is time to pray about the resources God is providing and doors He is opening. It is time to intentionally shift resources to support the proven work of national workers.

This is an exciting time for mission work! Churches that fail to catch the vision will miss out! It may be scary to think about changing the way we have done mission work, but the impact of expanding mission work and reaching more souls is incredible. The health of mission churches will improve. God is at work as the shape of mission work shifts.

At the very least, church leaders should be open to seeing what is happening in the vocational and bi-vocational shift toward national mission workers. Putting our heads in the sand will not change what is happening—it is time to study, understand, and embrace God’s work, even when He is at work in ways we had not seen before.

[Source: <https://www.biblicalleadership.com/blogs/the-bi-vocational-revolution-most-churches-are-missing/>]