

FACING THE FACTS IN MISSIONS

THE NEED FOR STRATEGY

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Chapter 1. The Need for Strategy

Almost 50 generations have passed since the Great Commission was given to the church and 3 billion souls still have not heard the gospel. Over 3 thousand languages still do not have a preacher of the Gospel or a verse of scripture. Over 15,000 people groups do not have a church among them. The countries of Libya and Mauritania do not have even one indigenous believer in Jesus Christ. In Austria, only 160 of its 4,000 towns and villages have a group of believers that regularly meet together. Zaire, a former colony of Belgium, has nearly 200 times more believers than Belgium itself. The Mongolian People's Republic is now one of the least evangelized countries in the world - only 50 believers among its 1.8 million population. The Kurds, the largest nation of people in the world without their own country and one of the most unreached peoples in the world (found in Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Syria and the USSR) number 25 million - with less than 100 believers. There are no known net national believers among the Maldivians and there are no Scriptures available, no Gospel radio programs directed toward them and no resident missionaries in the Maldivian Islands. India has 700,000 villages without a resident witness and only one evangelical church for every 2,000 villages. Andorra, a co-principality since 1278 AD, does not have one known Andorrano believer. San Marino, an enclave in north central Italy, has no known believers. Of the 38,000 towns and villages in France, 36,000 have no resident witness of Jesus Christ. There are 66,438 villages in Iran and only about half a dozen have a resident Christian witness. Saint Pierre and Miquelon, a department of France (eight rocky islands with 6,000 population south of Newfoundland at the mouth of the St. Lawrence River) do not have a witness or an evangelical church. In , there are no known believers. The great mega-cities of the world are becoming non-Christian at the rate of 29.5 million people every year - which is 80,700 every day, or one every second. There are 537 million Hindus who have never heard the Good News and only 100 missionaries working among them - one to 5,370,000.

The standard approach in missions among Fundamentalists has been limited worldwide to a very traditional approach. A missionary goes, not with a view of a nation or of a state, but a town or a subdivision. Most do not go by invitation or to some receptive seed families, but cold-turkey to a very localized area. The missionary furnishes a place to meet, provides the seating, is responsible for musical instruments, leads the singing, teaches the Sunday School, does the preaching, and possibly hauls everyone to services and back to their homes afterward. At the end of 10 years it is not unusual for him to be sitting somewhere pastoring 45 people.

THIS IS NOT NEW TESTAMENT MISSIONS!

The average missionary only has an outreach to some 5,000 souls. Considering the world population, we would need one million more missionaries at this rate of evangelism. This is probably not humanly possible.

There must be something better. God gives us a command to fulfill - to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. It is not an impossibility. It is possible to complete the Great Commission. However, some changes will be necessary if the job is to be done.

Chapter 2. Definition of Strategy

Strategy:

1. The science of planning and directing large scale military operations, specifically (as distinguished from tactics) of maneuvering forces into the most advantageous position prior to actual engagement with the enemy.
2. A plan or action based on this.
3. Skill in managing or planning, especially by using stratagem.

"Strategy differs from tactics. One has to do with the general plan of a campaign and the principles on which it is based. The other deals with the carrying out of the plan in its details and the various instrumentalities, agencies, and methods which are thought necessary to arrive at the aim which has been chosen. Tactics must be the constant study of those responsible for the conduct of the missionary enterprise. It is indispensable, but quite different from the study of the principles on which the world mission is built, the rationale of the enterprise as a whole." (Soper - The Philosophy of the Christian World Mission, 1943, p. 235)

In missions, strategy is an overall approach, plan, or way of describing how we will go about reaching our goal or solving our problem. It may not necessarily be concerned with all of the details.

Strategy has a much broader scope, however, than just long-range or major plans. Strategy is a way to reach an objective. It may mean everything, from deciding what country or language to serve in, to the overall approach to reaching a specific group of people.

Strategy will help to give us an overall sense of direction and an overall view of all elements needed to reach our objective. In the end, strategy becomes our statement of faith as to the project and objective in mind.

Chapter 3. Types of Strategy

There are many different approaches to strategies. Several will be discussed.

Being-In-The-Way Strategy. At first consideration this appears to be no strategy at all. People who adopt this strategy believe that it is not necessary to plan. They assume that God will lead. The implications of this strategy are that long-range planning is not very important because that is God's problem. The evangelist Philip in the book of Acts who was led by the Lord into a new situation is a valid argument of this theory. This was the plan followed by early-day faith missions as they took the Gospel into unknown countries. They knew they had a goal. They usually did not know what they would encounter. We must recognize these earlier missionaries who laid the foundation for the modern-day missionary movement.

Plan-So-Far Strategy. This strategy does not focus on outcomes but on beginnings. This assumes that we will plan to begin the work, and God will do the rest. It assumes that "once we're there", God will do the rest.

Standard Solution Strategy. This strategy works out a specific way of doing things, and then uses the same approach in every situation.

Door-to-door soul-winning would be an example. Some who have built "super churches" in the U.S. feel that this is the only approach to evangelism and that it will work anywhere in the world. In many cultures one does not knock on a door and expect to be heard as a stranger. In fact, the same ones who advocate this strategy solely, would probably not heed the message of a foreigner, speaking broken English, coming into their home with the declaration that they have the answer to their sin problem.

Every Home Crusade attempts to put a Gospel Tract into every home in the world. They assume that everyone can read and that everyone can make a decision for Christ if they are exposed to the right literature. Many times little consideration is given to the relevancy of the message or to the cultural background of the people.

The use of the Campus Crusade booklet, "Four Spiritual Laws", is another example of the Standard Solution Strategy. The assumption is that what will be effective in one place will be effective in another.

Firstly, the Standard Solution Strategy assumes that all problems or obstacles to evangelism are the same. Secondly, it is usually assumed that everyone will participate and understand what the strategy is. Thirdly, a standard strategy usually grows out of one culture and has more and more difficulty as it moves into new contexts.

Unique Solution Strategy. This strategy recognizes that every situation we face is different. Here is the conviction that each undertaking requires its own special strategy. It assumes that there is an answer and we can find a way. It is understood that standard solutions probably will not work. There are approaches to be used to discover God's strategy for each unique situation.

Chapter 4. Absolute Necessity of a Strategy

It has already been proven that we have failed. The Lord made available to His church everything necessary for the completion of the Great Commission. The job has not been done. Many times there has not been a clear goal in missions. "He that aims at nothing is sure to hit it."

"All over the world we have visited missionaries who seem to be in the business of doing, rather than getting things done. They appear not to have any strategy as to why they are there and what God intends to do because they are there. When asked for their goals and purposes, they give answers which sound fine, such as 'to bring the Word to this people.' One mission executive expressed his goal as 'laying Japan at the feet of Christ.' These are noble sentiments, but time and time again we found that these sentiments were not supported by well-thought-through ideas as to how this was to be accomplished or when it was to be accomplished." (Dayton and Fraser, *Planning Strategies For World Evangelization*, 1980, p. 20).

It is absolutely essential that each field have a strategy statement which covers both its long and short range plan of attack.

1. A strategy statement enables a Church to evaluate the thrust of the mission's work periodically and determine the quality of work being accomplished.
2. A strategy statement enables the church to make evaluations of requests and activity changes which various personnel endeavor to make.
3. A strategy statement enables the church to be of assistance in terms of recruiting further personnel and financial support.
4. A strategy statement enables the church to answer responsibly to the constituency as to the progress of the work on any given field.
5. A strategy statement makes clear to any potential candidate the type of work being done, where he can fit into the picture, and the route he must follow to qualify as a senior missionary.
6. A strategy statement enables the missionary to know just how he fits into the overall picture of the field's objectives.
7. A strategy statement enables the missionary to follow a pre-planned series of actions and activities over a number of years on the field. He or she is never without understanding as to how his or her work should be done.

8. A strategy statement brings the entire field conference together as a team. It helps avoid personality conflicts and the dominance of certain personalities when various activities are brought up for review. Like

a constitution, the strategy becomes a final court of appeal for each activity in which a missionary hopes to engage.

9. A strategy statement gives the conference a sense of meaning and purpose. It identifies each missionary according to his or her worth to the conference and his or her place in the overall structure". (Gordon

McDonald, Reflections on Mission Strategy, 1974 Marc)

A strategy statement is a plan for the evangelization of a given area. It defines the activity to be done, the area in which it is to be accomplished, how it will be done, and the methods to be employed.

Conclusion

It is time we got on with the real job the Lord gave us to do. God does have a way. There is an answer. Each country, language, ethnic group and people's group requires its own special strategy. There is no "cut and dried" approach to every situation. There are no standard means and methods. Each situation is unique.

Our approach must assume that we do not know God's strategy for a particular people and that we do not have the answers. Strategy puts us into the position of recognizing need. It can cause us to begin where the people are in their own context. We can discover how the message can best reach them. When we plan, the Holy Spirit can move and act to help us to do His will. Our emphasis then will be on people rather than methods.

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