

Missions Ministry Leadership Organized By Acts 1:8



by Paul Harper

Global Focus was founded by Larry Reesor in 1995. After years of experience in maturing his church's outreach as a pastor, Reesor found himself receiving many invitations to speak at other churches and to assist them in developing their outreach ministries. It became clear that the principles and dynamics that he used in his own church were transferable, and could benefit a wider audience. Additionally, Reesor spent over seventeen years refining and expanding his knowledge and experience in mobilizing local churches through the principles of personalization and partnership.

In ministering to churches through Global Focus, Reesor found several characteristics to be true in many churches with which he worked.

First, churches that reach out well tend to be doing so *either* globally *or* locally. These churches are effectively evangelizing nearby unchurched people, and this effort commands so much energy that world evangelization is given little or no attention. Other churches are seeing little or no growth by conversion locally, but invest plenty of money and people around the world. Sometimes such a church has given up on seeing fruit locally, and instead redoubles its efforts in more receptive, but distant, areas.

Second, many churches that are investing plentiful human and financial resources globally are doing so through what we call the *Support* paradigm. Such churches essentially are doing missions vicariously, funding mission agencies and their personnel to do the ministry "for them." The average layperson in the church perceives that to have any personal impact in world

evangelization requires taking 30 hours of Bible courses and learning another language - prerequisites beyond the reach of most working adults with family responsibilities.

Third, still other churches are simply building their own kingdoms, spending money primarily on themselves in order to build buildings, hire staff to minister to the congregation, and run programs that benefit attendees. At Global Focus, we've heard several pastors frankly admit that this was their understanding of effective ministry before they became convinced of the centrality of outreach in the local church's purpose.

In our experience at Global Focus, Acts 1:8 has come to stand out as an imperative for *any* local church: "You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." Jesus's commanding emphasis was not in one arena at the expense of another. In this verse was a call to balance, and to influence in *all arenas*. At Global Focus, we call this a *Balanced Corporate Strategy*.

Larry became convinced that a local church must be intentional about each of its Acts 1:8 spheres of responsibility, and this intentionality must be reflected in purposeful structure. To that end, we ask churches that we consult with to structure their entire outreach along the lines of their Acts 1:8 responsibilities.

Using our advised structure, a church establishes a leadership team for each of its Acts 1:8 responsibilities:

➤ a Jerusalem team, which normally strategizes for outreach to the geographical area from where church attendees come

- a Judea team, usually related to the church's broader metropolitan area or state
- a Samaria team, usually related to the U.S. or North America, or the church's local cross-cultural outreach
- an Ends of the Earth team, whose work is related to cross-cultural outreach occurring beyond the regular contact of the congregation. Creating such teams should not communicate division or competition between outreach to these arenas, but quite the opposite: that those overseeing these areas of outreach need to interact synergistically and seamlessly. This structure also allows for an increasing number of people to be involved in outreach. Pastors have told us that, for the first time, they have everyone in their church on the same page, going in the same direction, with intentionality and purpose.

We encourage local churches to arrive at their own delineations of Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the Ends of the Earth. For instance, some churches create one team to oversee both Judea and Samaria responsibilities.

The church also creates an overarching executive team that manages all of the Acts 1:8 area teams. This oversight team is composed of those whom the church deems important to be on the team. At a minimum we recommend that the pastor and the heads of each of the Acts 1:8 teams comprise this team, and we would also suggest that a smaller number is advisable. This team establishes the big-picture vision and core values that will guide each of the Acts 1:8 teams. Each Acts 1:8 team develops a strategy for its arena and submits it to the executive team.

Some reading this article may react this way to our proposed structure: "It's a great idea, but we can't even find enough people to serve on one

missions committee, much less three or four additional teams. Where would we find enough people for all of those teams?" May we suggest that your problem is bigger than your structure. Our experience tells us that if so few people are excited about the church's outreach, it is not a highly-held value in the church, particularly among your leaders.

Global Focus does not prescribe how a church will subsequently carry out any of its outreach ministries. For example, we do not insist that every church evangelize locally through Evangelism Explosion (though some churches choose to use that method). We realize that every church is unique and that no one methodology works for every church.

Our suggested structuring assists churches in becoming far more intentional where they previously lacked focus and cohesiveness. For example, churches that had strong missions programs, yet weak local outreach, begin to see evangelistic fruit locally. Churches evaluate their regular programs and are often stunned by how many ministries they run simply to entertain their own people. One church that puts on an elaborate annual "Living Christmas Tree" program decided to re-structure it as an outreach event and sent out 46,000 invitations to the community. Another church in Georgia that had long run a popular annual Valentine's Day banquet decided to transform it into an outreach event. This past year the "ticket" for entry was bringing a non-Christian couple to the event.

One church that has benefited from re-structuring its outreach along the lines of Acts 1:8 is Southside Christian Church, a church of 550 in Harrodsburg, KY. Southside hosted one of our weekend seminars and soon the church's



elders decided that the Acts 1:8 model would sharpen the church's outreach vision. Until that point, Southside's strongest ministry had been local outreach through its Agape House, a mercy ministry that distributed clothes and furniture to those in need. The church dabbled in Judea and Samaria ministries, and was doing virtually nothing for the Ends of the Earth. One missions committee "met, drew up an annual budget, and just wrote checks," says Larry Moore, Southside's missions elder.

Southside established four leadership teams to strategize for ministry to their Jerusalem (Harrodsburg, their county, and a few surrounding counties), their Judea (Kentucky), Samaria (the United States) and the Ends of the Earth (the rest of the world). Its executive team varies slightly from most churches that have adopted the Global Focus model. It is comprised of four people, none of whom are the Acts 1:8 team leaders. Yet the executive team interacts regularly with all Acts 1:8 team leaders.

While Southside's outreach is still emerging, the church has made giant leaps. Its mercy ministry through Agape House has expanded, and will soon begin a ministry to Hispanic migrant workers who work in local horse and tobacco industries. In its Judea, the church has expanded in its ministry to a home for the handicapped, a few counties away. In its Samaria, the church has partnered with Kids' Connection, a ministry to inner-city kids in Washington, D.C. The church will send two work teams to Washington in 2002, and one church member has begun working full-time with this ministry.

In the Ends of the Earth, the church has started working in partnership in the Caribbean. Southside has sent three short-term teams to help

Young Life build a camp in the Dominican Republic. One church member has since decided to begin full-time ministry in that country. A short-term team will go to Jamaica in June 2002 for another building project. Also in 2002, a team of six will travel to Madagascar in partnership with Wycliffe and the Jesus Film project, to explore the possibility of adopting the Bara, an Unreached People Group.

Traditionally, the church has tithed its budget to missions, yielding \$40,000 annually out of a \$400,000 unified budget. At the church's Annual Global Impact Celebration in September 2001, however, the congregation pledged an additional \$240,000 to missions (all Acts 1:8 ministries) over and above the annual \$40,000 amount normally given. What has motivated this type of involvement?

"Our new intentionality has created a sense of ownership and involvement among the congregation," says Moore. "They see God at work and want to be a part of it."

Re-structuring the church's missions leadership is not what created this excitement. But the intentionality demanded by the re-structuring "creates 'followship'," says Moore. "People want to get on board. Much as the University of Kentucky basketball team generates excitement and sellout crowds because they win 20+ games a year, so people in a church get behind ministry when they see the results of intentionality."

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