

Global Partnerships – Issues and Challenges

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Introduction

Leslie Newbigin: “Our witness must be in some recognizable sense a joint witness, so that men may see not us but God, who has made us partners and brothers who were once strangers and foreigners to each other. I’m not asking for large organizations, for the wholesale pooling of funds and resources. I do not believe that this will be helpful. I’m asking for a variety of specific arrangements in particular cases, in which Christians of different nations and denominations pool their effort in such a way that men will recognize in our mission not the remnants of colonialism and the cultural expansion of the West, but the going forth into all the world of him who is the Saviour of the world” (extract from a sermon delivered in 1960 at Riverside Church, New York).

Main Issues

- Understanding of biblical partnership
- Cultural sensitivity
- Trust and respect
- Financial matters
- Power and control

Challenges for Non-Western Missionaries

- Inferiority complex (pride) to healthy self-image (limitations)
- Dependency to interdependency
- Prejudices and unforgiveness
- Accountability and reliability

Challenges for Western Missionaries

- Apologising for past mistakes and colonial attitudes
- Emerging missionary movement in the South
- Recognising non-western leaders as equal partners
- Major restructuring to facilitate the changing roles
- Adjusting to diverse working and leadership styles
- Sharing of resources after leadership transition has taken place
- Changing from a task-oriented partnership to people-oriented partnership

Conclusion

Newbigin: “The forms and patterns of the missionary task are changing and will change as the consequence of the fact that the Church is now worldwide. But the missionary task is still fundamentally the same – to go forth outside the frontiers of Christendom and make Christ known among all nations. ... We must press on together as partners in obedience towards the goal.”