

NETWORKING FOR EFFECTIVE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY AND MISSION

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Having a specific strategy when it comes to networking can immediately add value to your kingdom work. Without a networking strategy, you could find yourself wandering around aimlessly.

I can learn from everyone; all can help me grow. As I seek relationships and networks that will reorient my perceptions, increase my vision, and help me see new opportunities, I like a diversity of backgrounds and experiences. I want to be aware and balanced. Effective networking involves three dimensions.

- Networking with those who are one step ahead of me
- Networking with those who are going through the same things I am going through, those who are traveling a road that is relatively parallel, with similar experiences and goals
- Networking with those who want to follow, learn, and grow

Here is how it works out in my experience. Here are some of the things I want to keep in mind as I try to spiral upward and break into new levels of ministry and missions.

Some are one step ahead of me

I look for those who are a step ahead of me—churches, ministries, small groups, mission works, home churches. I seek those who are breaking into levels that I have not yet understood or reached. As I travel, I am constantly watching, listening, and learning.

There is a tendency to look only to the largest churches to understand how effective ministry works. That approach is based on an erroneous assumption. I want to look at those who are modeling spiritual dynamics, experiencing success, and touching souls. I try to identify model churches and to understand why and how they work. I am seeking models of spiritual growth, leadership, member development, education, edification, equipping, evangelism, and church planting. I am constantly looking to those who can help me understand how to increase kingdom potential with excellence.

Some are experiencing the same things, with the same goals, same challenges, and same basic understandings

I want to understand how others are processing the opportunities and challenges, how they are tweaking the models, fitting into specific contexts; I want to understand the similarities and differences. This principle, when applied more broadly, can help me learn how to refine approaches, and how to work through church dynamics in membership, ministry, mission, evangelism, leadership, and other areas.

Some are following my footsteps but doing God's work better than ever

I try to model excellence in ministry and missions. I want to do God's work well, but international invitations and travels often put me in unknown situations. When I share, others take what they learn and improve on my ideas. They advance God's work in mighty ways, especially in cross-cultural contexts. We Christians have not always contextualized the gospel well. I look for churches that are working in cultural contexts that I know, but I also look for churches that are facing different cultural contexts. In such situations, my task as an invited teacher is to present biblical principles. Those who learn from me become those from whom I learn, because I want to understand their successes and failures, the why, and the how, as they take the gospel into their part of the world.

In your networking for Christ, consider these three dimensions: those who have advanced further, those working through the same stages, those who are following and learning. Networking relationships in all three dimensions will enrich your kingdom efforts in ministry and missions!