

## **CROSS-POLLINATING ENABLES EFFECTIVE MISSION WORK**

**By Bob Young**

Pollination allows plants to reproduce. The wind and rain blow pollen; bees and other insects spread pollen. In human relationships, “cross-pollination” describes a process of exposing people to new ways of thinking by sharing knowledge, combining insights—mixing, blending, and intermingling thinking to understand new, creative, innovative ways forward. This process makes it possible to do more than was done in the past.

**In every moment of our lives, we are involved in receiving and giving.** Every new situation, gathering, and relationship opens new possibilities for giving and receiving. The kingdom grows through giving and receiving. I am constantly receiving so that I can pass it on. I am constantly giving so that others can receive and pass it on.

**GIVING** – I constantly ask myself, what am I to contribute in this situation? What influence, information, ideas am I to share? What can I give to others that they can take away from this moment? In ministry and mission work, this sharing focuses on bearing fruit, effective Christian living and leadership. What can I share that will help this church bear fruit? What will help these leaders, these Christians? What will help the gospel bear fruit here? How can the gospel take root in this heart? Such giving is one aspect of cross-pollination.

**RECEIVING** – Since the kingdom grows through giving and receiving, I also ask myself, what should I receive in this place so that I can take it to another place to share it elsewhere?

Cross-pollination involves these two things. I am constantly receiving so that I can pass it on. I am constantly giving so that others can receive. They continue the process by passing it on.

**What is the role of cross-pollination in effective mission work?** In Latin American Leadership Development (LALD), we reinforce the transformative value and importance of cross-pollination for the churches as part of the process of sharing the gospel effectively. We facilitate receiving and giving. The goal is to transform rigid, repetitive limiting contexts into positive learning environments, enabling the spread of the gospel and growth of the churches.

Cross-pollination between plants enables the creation of new types of plants with different attributes. As a metaphor, it points to the power of sharing ideas in the church; exchanging changing ideas, thoughts, information, and knowledge for the enrichment of the local churches, drawing on multiple sources, continuous learning, growth, change, adapting for effectiveness.

The metaphor also describes the spread of the gospel and the growth of the kingdom. I think of the metaphor as a description of the work of LALD—encouraging the churches to be constantly giving, constantly receiving.

With vibrant, growing faith and understanding, I constantly deposit new ideas, new concepts, new insights, in new places and new people. I look forward to receiving, because I am empowered to give what is needed to others. I give so others can receive and pass it on. They in turn give and others are blessed by receiving, and those others are empowered to pass it on. This is the process described in 2 Timothy 2:2, the gospel goes forth generation after generation. When it comes to the Good News and Bible teachings, Christians are more than receptacles or storage basins. We are to be filled and overflowing, sharing the overflow.

**God’s mission work bears kingdom fruit, bringing people to Jesus.** In the metaphor of cross-pollination, another essential point is seen. Nature does not continuously pollinate the same trees and plants. The goal is not to share the gospel and Bible teachings with those who have already received. Pollination bears new fruit.

Effective mission efforts must be committed to sharing in new places with new people. The process I am describing is impossible without both receiving and giving! When one gives without receiving, the storage basin runs dry. Cross-pollination requires constantly receiving. Beware of those who talk a lot (give) but seldom listen (receive). Those who share effectively spend a great deal of time listening. A question for all, when am I taking time to receive, listen, contemplate, meditate?

Let us give thanks that God is at work among his people, demonstrated in a network of national churches and national Christians, resulting in 100s, even 1000s, of baptisms each year.