

MISSIONS: Do You or Your Church Need to Make Halftime Adjustments?

By Bob Young

We are at the half-way point of another year. What happens at halftime? A coach helps a team evaluate the successes and failures of the first half with an eye to improving in the second half. In the same way, the middle point of the calendar year is a good time to evaluate the mission work of a local church. Does your church need to make some adjustments? The goal is to make corrections and understand how to improve. An important part of the half-time review is moving on from the past (Phil. 3:10-14); a second part of the review is pressing on with the goal in mind is essential. Paul urges that we make the most of every opportunity (Eph. 5:15-16).

What is the goal? Is your goal consistent with God's goal for missions?

Some churches are loath to set goals. Such is a mistake! "If we aim at nothing, we will hit it every time!"

Many of the U.S. churches I consult with have no specific goals for their mission work. They have no idea what has been accomplished over a set period of time. They have no way of evaluating effectiveness so they just keep doing the same thing year after year, hoping for different and better results. Mission work should result in souls won for the kingdom! (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 1:8; Eph. 1:9-10).

In LALD, we have specific goals and specific strategies. We work in the development of churches that want to fulfill God's mission in this world. We train, mentor, and guide. The churches adopt effective strategies for evangelism, outreach, discipleship, spiritual development, and church planting.

The goal is to bring as many as possible under the Lordship of Jesus as quickly as possible! The goal requires the establishment of new churches, spiritual development and maturity, the training of leaders, discipleship training, and prayerful planning so that the churches become missionary churches with a heart for establishing more churches.

One church we work with has seven mission points where efforts are being made to develop new churches. We have been helping with transportation finances for four of the works. On a recent trip, they told me they would handle six of the seven church planting efforts if I would help them focus on the sector with the greatest possibility.

In six to eight international mission trips each year, I can work in up to 25 locations, either with local churches or in regional seminars. The work focuses specifically on approximately 100 churches who are winning an average of 30 souls for our Lord each year.

How is what you are doing related to the goal?

Many churches have a large number of mission efforts, including multiple short-term mission trips (STMs), but many of the activities do not have specific goals and have little to do with God's goal for mission work (Eph. 1:9-10). It is good to involve our youth in "mission work," but they deserve to be involved in and observe mission work that is doing what God wants done.

Every mission effort must have specific goals that are related to sowing and reaping, following Jesus' instructions to pray for harvest workers. STMs should be more than fun-filled vacations. What is accomplished should clearly relate to winning souls. As Phil Slate has written, "When someone asks you to help financially with a mission trip, the first question you should ask is, 'What will you be doing?'" Are those who go doing God's mission work? Are the mission activities of your church related to God's goal for mission work?

What is the exit strategy? What guidelines are in place for making the mission work self-supporting?

At the midpoint of the year, looking forward to the rest of this year and future “games,” it is good for the local church to ask about exit strategy. Some highly productive mission works may deserve support until Jesus comes, but when the goal is self-sufficient, self-directed, self-duplicating churches, the time will come for the supporting church to exit. It is not easy to put a time limit, but some well-known mission organizations think in terms of 5 to 7 to 10 years in order to establish a capable church.

What have been the results?

While we all recognize that one soul is worth the whole world, to refuse to evaluate results and effectiveness is to fulfill Jesus’ teaching when he said the children of the world are wiser than the children of light. There is nothing wrong with setting goals and evaluating results.

Ten years ago, we set a goal in LALD to work with churches to facilitate the winning of 20000 souls for Jesus in 10 years. We dreamed of 10 new churches with biblical organization and leaders. We dreamed of at least 10 new churches. Those dreams have been far surpassed with God’s power.

At LALD, we provide support resources and do not, as a rule, support workers (except in some select cases where bridging funding is needed). We recognize that God’s workers are worthy of their wages. If your church wants to be in contact with mission workers (nationals) who are doing God’s work, we can help. In our experience, the works that are fulfilling God’s purpose, bearing fruit, and developing healthy local churches capable of becoming self-sufficient, self-directed, and self-duplicating are national workers who are working in the cause of the gospel in their own countries.

What changes or adjustments do you need to make?

In many churches, changes or adjustments cannot be made immediately. For this reason, the midpoint of the year is a great time to evaluate the mission work in a local church so that the changes can be planned and communicated well in advance of the next cycle and continued commitments.

At LALD, we have already communicated that certain bridging commitments for 2019 will not be continued in 2020. We have helped for a brief time so the local churches can step up and provide the resources necessary. We are already making new commitments for 2020 where we see God giving the increase. It is not difficult to say “yes” when elders in the Dominican Republic point to 600 Christians where there were none only three years ago. It is not hard to say “yes” when a national worker is establishing a new church where there are continual baptisms and attendance is 35-40 after one year, or where attendance at a church plant has reached 15-20 within the first few months, again with regular baptisms.

Will you pray?

Yesterday I returned from visiting with churches and preachers in Peru. On a weekday evening, the church assembled to pray for mission. If I could suggest only one adjustment, it would be to challenge your church members to pray daily and regularly for missions, and to provide many more opportunities to focus on missions as a congregation in prayer.

Please read, understand, and pray. It is time for God’s people to get out there and “get in the game.” It is time to move forward in faith in mission work, expecting that God will give the increase and that multitudes will be won to Christ. Pray to the Lord of the harvest for harvest workers, and commit to sending harvest workers to reap the harvest (Matt. 9:35-38). THE question is: “Are the workers you are sending harvest workers?”