

RAISING SUPPORT IN AN AFRICAN CONTEXT

Led by Dr Ezekiel Ajibade

The group had the following goals in mind as it went into the workshop:

- To define biblical principles for supporting gospel workers in economically constrained contexts.
- To evaluate tentmaking as a faithful and wise strategy within mission, including its strengths and limitations.
- To identify cooperative support models that enable churches to share responsibility for missionaries.
- To clarify the roles and responsibilities of sending churches in caring for missionaries beyond finances.
- To address common challenges, pressures, and misunderstandings related to raising support in African contexts.
- To consider biblical examples (e.g., Acts 18; Philippians 4; 2 Corinthians 8–9) that inform sustainable missionary support.

It also had the following outcome in mind – that by the end of this workshop, participants will be equipped to:

- Discern appropriate support models for different contexts
- Encourage tentmaking without romanticizing it
- Build cooperative support structures among churches
- Send African missionaries with clarity, care, and sustainability

From our two-day deliberation on the workshop focus (raising support in an African context) and based on the case study of the Greater Mavuno District dilemma, our thoughts are crystallized by responses to the following three questions:

1. What did you learn about raising support faithfully in Africa?
2. How can tentmaking serve—not replace—the mission of the church?
3. What counsel would you give to young African missionaries?

1. What Did You Learn About Raising Support Faithfully in Africa

- a. The Churches are willing to cooperate. With the move of God in Africa, churches are open and willing to cooperate if given the right motivation and mobilization. While there may be a blend of options, churches working together to send missionaries remains the best approach.
- b. Africa has the resources. With God's blessings upon the continent in terms of human and material resources, Africa should never think it is poor or cannot fund missions. What is needed is setting the right priorities.

- c. There is a need for a mindset shift. The idea that a missionary is a white man or woman, European or American, has to go. The Great Commission is for all believers who are saved, anywhere they find themselves on the face of the earth. There is no regard to age, color, race or status. The mindset that it is only by foreign support that we can do missions must also go. We can raise support from within Africa to do missions in Africa and beyond it.
- d. We must have a structured and intentional approach to funding that is sustainable. While the faith-based mission is commendable, the church is the chief sender when it comes to missions. The church must plan and have a blueprint for sustainable mission engagement for its church members who want to go.
- e. We should stop building personal empires. The era of an inward-looking paradigm that only accumulates structure and sitting capacities must be done away with. The church must not neglect the lost world. Missions should also be done in partnership. One church congregation or church alone cannot do it.
- f. The African church must encourage members to be missionaries. We must grow each congregation with the mentality that all members are missionaries

2. How Can Tent-Making Serve- Not Replace- the Mission of the Church?

- a. Tent making should be seen as a means of gaining access and sustaining the missionary while doing the mission. The missionary must not abandon the mission for the tent. There must be an intentional and consistent balance between the work and the means to sustain the work.
- b. There must be accountability even for tentmakers. The idea that tentmakers do not rely on the church for sustenance and do not need to be accountable to the church is not helpful. There must be a reporting system.
- c. The tentmakers also need development and pastoral care. It is possible to think the tentmaker is self-sufficient and should be able to take care of his/her emotional and other needs. The church must care for his/her tent-making skills development and should care pastorally for him/her. Constant leadership development and seeking after his welfare are necessary.

3. What counsel would you give to Young African Missionaries?

- a. They must have a good relationship with the sending church. Going solo or severing a relationship with the sending church has not been helpful in past experiences.
- b. Young African Missionaries must set good boundaries in terms of morality and integrity.
- c. Anyone going into missions must make sure they are saved, and they are called into that vocation.
- d. Young missionaries must endeavor to grow with the sending organization. Each church and organization has its own dynamics and phases of growth. They should avoid jumping around and be part of the organization's fabric and DNA.
- e. They should be kingdom-focused. There are a lot of distractions out there.
- f. They should prioritize language acquisition and cultural acquisition.
- g. They should ensure they have a mentor.