HOW TO IDENTIFY A "GOOD" MISSION AGENCY

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If we were serious about the idea that mission is Godâ€™s activity and not ours, we would be much less precious about organisational boundaries.
Category: Observations

Despite the rather grandiose claim in the title of this post, I'm actually going to focus on one particular area of mission agency life, albeit a very important one. It's not impossible that this will turn into a series that looks at other issues, but for today, I'm reflecting on something that I encountered over the weekend.

For one reason or another, I found myself reading a guide which a mission agency had produced to encourage people to pray for a particular country. Now, it just so happened that the country concerned is one that I know fairly well. I've made numerous visits there and have lots of friends who work there now or who have done in the past. I know lots of the mission agencies working in the country and I'm aware of a number of the church denominations who are active there. However, I'd never actually come across the organisation that produced the prayer guide in that particular country. Now, in itself, that's not a problem. If an organisation wants to encourage prayer for different countries and regions, I'm all for it. The more the better.

What was interesting was that the prayer guide made no mention of the specific churches or organisations who are actively working on the ground in the country, though they did mention themselves a few times. They spoke about specific types of ministry without ever mentioning who it is that is actually doing and sponsoring the work.

Let me make a couple of possibly controversial statements.

If you are really interested in promoting prayer for a country, you will deliberately mention the local churches and other mission agencies that are working in the country. At the very least, you will provide links to stories and further prayer information on other agency websites. None of us has the whole story and if we truly want people to pray for a situation, we will provide as much information as we can, even if it comes from *rival* organisations.

Looking at the flip-side; if you say you are producing a prayer guide for a country or region, but only ever mention your own organisation, what you are really doing is promoting yourself with a spiritual gloss.

A couple of years ago, I wrote something related to this:

> *Missio DeiÂ changes how agencies work together. Mission agencies will say that they*

> *donâ€™t compete, but they all produce their own magazines, have their own branding, Twitter feeds, Facebook pages and what-have-yous. To the outsider, it certainly looks like competition. It is true that behind the publicity machine there is a good deal of cooperation in some areas â€“ especially when it comes to working together on the field. However, if we were serious about the idea that mission is Godâ€™s activity and not ours, we would be much less precious about organisational boundaries.*

So to finally get round to answering my question:

A good mission agency is one that demonstrates a real concern for God's work by encouraging an interest in and support for agencies other than themselves.