WHO SPEAKS ABOUT MISSION?

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I've been a regular churchgoer for just about the whole of my life and over the years, I've developed some opinions about what happens in church services. However, I've never worked in a church and I have no first hand knowledge of the joys and pains of church leadership. I have lots of friends in that line of work, so I've heard a good bit about it, but I would never claim to be an expert in Church leadership.

So why is it that some Church leaders feel that their experience makes them experts in my field; cross cultural mission? I'm sorry, but making Â occasional trips overseas doesn't qualify you to speak about the nature of mission any more thanÂ sitting in a pew gives me the background to talk about church leadership. Sadly, I have beenÂ in large Christian gatherings and conferences where well meaning and enthusiastic church leaders have given talks on mission that have made my toes curl in embarrassment. The passion was there, the zeal was there, but they weren't matched with an understanding of contemporary mission situations or thinking. Welcome to the 1950s!

Now please don't misunderstand me. I love it when church leaders are enthusiastic about overseas mission; nothing makes my job more enjoyable. I also deeply value the faithful work of church leaders who expound the Scriptures week by week and shepherd the flock God has placed under their care; I wouldn't be where I am as Christian without them. I need Godly church leaders to do what God calls them to.

I also love it that some big conferences and conventions have a 'mission slot' during their programme. But can I gently suggest to the organisers of these events, that they might like to involve people with a serious overseas mission background to take these slots rather than asking a big name church leader or speaker? I can give you a list of names if you want!

I realise that Christian events need the big name speakers to pull in the punters, but I also believe that we need to invest in people who are able to motivate a new generation of people to be involved in cross-cultural mission today.