

# LET'S TALK ABOUT MONEY

*Posted on May 24, 2018 by Eddie*

If a church has identified someone and commissioned them to go to another country to do something that the church wants done; the church is responsible for ensuring they have the finance they need.

**Category:** [Observations](#)

This is the fourth post in my short series on how churches should identify and select potential mission-partners, I'll provide links to the full series at the foot of this one. The gist of my series is that churches need to be proactive in identifying people for mission service and should not wait around until someone decides they have a call. Actually, they should be proactive in helping all Christians think about their ministry, whether that is in Timbuktu or Telford.

So, let's talk about missionary support - or, rather, let's not.

I think we have a problem with vocabulary and the language of "support" is not adequate to describe the relationship between a church and the people who it sets aside for ministry. Friends and families *support* missionaries; they provide finance, they pray and they send encouraging letters and bars of chocolate. A sending church should have a much broader relationship than this and while they do *support* their mission partners, I would much rather think of a church having *responsibility* towards those they commission for mission work (missionaries also have responsibility to their churches - but that isn't my focus, today).

An unfortunate consequence of the church/agency divide that exists in the mission world is that some churches feel that they can sub-contract mission work to agencies and, not only that, but some agencies are more than happy to let them do so. I've written more about that [here](#) (follow the links). If a church commissions one of their members for mission work - lays hands on them and prays for them - then they are the ones who are responsible for that person. The agency may take care of day-to-day management and logistics, but the person remains a church member, carrying out the church's world-wide mission with the support of the agency. Of course, there needs to be good communication between the agency and the church, clear lines of accountability and a mutual understanding of how the person will spend their time. However, it is the church that is responsible for their member - that relationship should not change.

In most cases, there is no problem with this. However, if the missionary faces some sort of trauma, or needs to be disciplined for moral lapse then the role of the sending church becomes absolutely critical and everyone needs to know where they stand and what their responsibility is. If a missionary has more than one *supporting* church, there needs to be open communication between those churches and a clear understanding as to who has actually commissioned them for ministry. I have known missionaries who had a number of supporting churches who were each unaware of the others' existence - something that is far from ideal. It should be clear to all involved who is the *sending church*.

So with that in mind, let's finally talk about filthy lucre.

Mission work can be expensive. There is a romantic view that missionaries can live on fresh air and used tea bags and in some cases that may be true. However, if you are trying to reach middle class people in Tokyo, you are likely to need an income that would make most church treasurer's eyes water. You don't build a tower without counting the cost and churches shouldn't commission

missionaries without a realistic understanding of the money involved. Here is a basic principle:

*If a church has identified someone and commissioned them to go to another country to do something that the church wants done; the church is responsible for ensuring they have the finance they need.*

I do not think it is appropriate to see the *sending church* as one supporter among others - the sending church has a unique responsibility. However, this does not mean that the supporting church has to provide all of the finance that the mission worker requires - this would be impossible for most churches in the UK. Their role is to ensure that the missionary has the finance. The mission partner may have a job in the country that they are going to - that's what Paul did and it's an increasingly important approach in some parts of the world. Alternatively, the sending church could introduce the missionary to other congregations who (in the absence of their own mission partners) might be able to provide some regular support. There are many ways in which a church can take responsibility to help their missionary raise funds. However, the common pattern where a church commissions mission workers and then sends them out on their own to find 80% of their support is not appropriate.

[If you commission people to be missionaries, then take responsibility for their welfare - and this includes money. Click To Tweet](#)

Just a few remarks in closing:

- I've not talked about things like prayer and other forms of spiritual and emotional support. These are the responsibility of the sending church, too. But you can only say so much in a blog post.
- As I mentioned above, the missionary also has responsibilities to the church. I might spell these out in a subsequent post - but that's not what I was talking about here.
- This is all based on the presupposition that a church is proactively seeking to be involved in world mission by identifying and commissioning people to do things that the church wants done. In the more common scenario, where an individual senses a call and comes to the church for support, the whole thing falls apart.

## **Posts In This Series**

[Whom Shall We Send?](#)

[What To Do With A Call](#)

[Get in First: Thoughts on Proactivity in Mission](#)

[Let's Talk About Money](#)

