

## Different Contributions Needed for the Advance of The Gospel

The purpose of this paper is to introduce and increase understanding of four vital contributions to the movement of the Gospel.

Desired outcomes:

- Discussion, study, thought, and prayer.
- Appropriate application to ensure that each of these contributions is well understood and is being brought to bear effectively for the advance of the Gospel.

**Our Vision Statement** describes the different contributions that people make within our Navigator movement in these ways:

*Ordinary people, in many walks of life, are joyfully leading integrated lives. They live as **fruitful insiders** among the lost.... The Gospel spreads naturally and powerfully, as believers share Christ ... life upon life ... family to family.*

*Crossing cultures into new cities and nations, **teams of mobile pioneers** intentionally proclaim and embody the good news of Jesus Christ....*

*The **leaders** of this movement, developed and empowered for God's service, live out a growing commitment to Christlikeness. They are dependent upon the Holy Spirit. New generations of **leaders** are emerging, rooted incarnationally in their **local** and **national** contexts. An **international** leadership community brings focus, alignment and energy to their movement. These leaders are clearly committed to long-term impact in generational ministry.*

Over the last two years, as we have studied the Scriptures together in our International Leadership Community, we have sharpened our focus on these different contributions, identifying the clear need for the following four functions.

- **Pioneering teams:** or pioneering laborers and leaders. Those who move into new places or new contexts to plant the Gospel and to lay the foundations of a generational ministry.
- **Local labourers:** we often use the term “insiders or “insider labourers” to describe this contribution, though in missiological circles the term “insider” is beginning to have particular connotations which might affect our use of the word.
- **Local Leaders:** those who care for, lead, and build community among labourers in a local context.
- **Mobile alongsiders:** leaders (both national and international) who are available and committed to travel to come alongside local labourers and leaders and pioneering teams, in order to encourage and strengthen them in their lives and ministry.

In 1 Thessalonians each of these different contributions to the advance of the Gospel are clearly visible.

- Paul, Silas, and Timothy came as **pioneers** to Thessalonica with the Gospel, committed to planting the Gospel among local people.
- As people in Thessalonica became believers they began to reach out with the Gospel as **local laborers, insiders** in their own context.
- By the time the letter was written there were already **local leaders** to whom Paul can refer as “*those who work hard among you and are over you in the Lord.*”
- Paul also refers to Timothy’s visits to them to “*strengthen and encourage*” them in their faith. Timothy’s contribution was to provide **mobile leadership**. We know from Acts and Paul’s letters that Paul and Timothy (as well as others like Titus and Tychicus) exercised an international leadership function to support and encourage the local ministries that had been planted. We refer to their contribution as **mobile alongsiders** (from the Greek word for *encourage*, which has the sense of being *called alongside* or *calling from alongside*).

The same mix of contributions can be studied in the planting and growth of the Gospel in:

- **Galatia**, see Acts 13-15 and Galatians.
- **Philippi**, see Acts 16 and Philippians.
- **The Roman province of Asia** (Ephesus and the surrounding area, including, among other towns, Colossae) See Acts 19-20, Colossians, Ephesians, and 1 Timothy.

## The Vital Contributions of Pioneering Teams

In the New Testament we see pioneering teams of at least two types:

- **Unplanned Initiatives:** Those who, without any special commissioning, find themselves in a new context and take initiatives with the Gospel. A good example of this is the way the Gospel was planted in Antioch in Acts 11:20-21: *certain men of Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus.* Notice that this initiative was intentionally followed up and built on by Barnabas and Paul.
- **Planned Initiatives:** Teams specifically commissioned and sent out to pioneer a new ministry. An example of that would be Paul and Barnabas being commissioned and sent from Antioch to Cyprus in Acts 13:1-4.

We should be encouraging both sorts of pioneering initiatives.

**Effective pioneering** (some observations from Paul’s ministry in Acts and the Epistles):

Notice that Paul was imprisoned and thrown out of Philippi after a few days, was only in Thessalonica a few weeks before he was forced to leave, was in Corinth just 18 months, and in Ephesus for 3 years. Yet in all these places, 10 years later there were growing



Paul had a passionate commitment to the fruit of his ministry to see them deeply grounded in Christ (Colossians 2:1-3), growing to maturity (Philippians 3:15-17), and overflowing with love to those around them (1 Thessalonians 3:12). His prayers reveal the longing of his heart for the ordinary believers in the towns where he planted the Gospel. The example of Epaphras, the Colossian who carried the Gospel into the community of his native Colossae and nearby Laodicea, is a beautiful example of how the Gospel spread through the Province of Asia (Acts 19:10) as a result of Paul's ministry in Ephesus.

For us as Navigators, the focus and end result of all our efforts is this: to see the Gospel advancing through spiritual generations of labourers living and discipling among the lost. Compelled by the compassion of Jesus, we pray and work toward seeing labourers, workers for the Kingdom, next door to everywhere (Matthew 9:36-38).

## The Vital Contributions of Local Leaders

In each place where the Gospel was planted Paul and his teammates were diligent about developing, appointing, and overseeing local leaders. In Paul's ministries this seems to have been done as early as possible, generating local ownership, calling for greater commitment, and enabling local community.

No single Greek word is used consistently to describe how leaders were developed or appointed, which indicates that no one practice was used in every situation.

**Mark 3:14** *He appointed [Greek poieo, literally "He made"] twelve—designating them apostles—that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach.*

**Luke 10:1** *After this the Lord appointed [Greek anadeiknumi, literally "showed," as in Acts 1:24] seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go.*

**Acts 6:3-6** *Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over [Greek kathisteemi, as in Titus 1:5] to them.*

**Acts 14:23** *Paul and Barnabas appointed [Greek cheirotoneo, literally "chose," this word has associations of voting by a show of hands] elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust.*

**1 Corinthians 12:28** *And in the church God has appointed [Greek titheemi, literally "placed," as in John 15:16] first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues.*

**Ephesians 4:11** *It was he who gave [Greek didomi] some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers,*

**1 Timothy 5:22** *Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands [Greek epitithemi cheir], and do not share in the sins of others. Keep yourself pure.*

**Titus 1:5** *The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint [Greek kathisteemi, literally “make to stand up” or “firmly place”] elders in every town, as I directed you.*

**Acts 20:25-37** describes Paul’s commissioning of the Ephesian elders, stressing their responsibilities and giving insight into how Paul developed them. 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 describe qualities Paul looked for in local leaders and 1 Timothy 5:17-22 addresses oversight issues.

### **Some important observations:**

- Local leadership was plural with a mix of gifting.
- There was intentionality about developing local leaders.
- There was clarity about appointing local leaders.
- A combination of God’s gifting and of human evaluation and recognition.
- Character is more prominent than gifting in the lists of qualities to look for.
- Commitment to the Scriptures and the Gospel and ability and faithfulness in teaching were considered vital.
- Paul made a point in Ephesus to model supporting himself and giving (to the poor and to support Timothy, Titus, etc.) as an example to the Ephesian elders (Acts 20:34-35). This indicates that in most cases, local leaders were not fully supported by gifts. However, 1 Timothy 5:17-18 seems to indicate that it is appropriate for some local leaders to be supported financially, *especially those whose work is preaching and teaching.*

This whole matter of developing and appointing local leaders, especially including many who are not full-time “staff,” is a critical issue for us in helping local labourers continue to live out our Calling.

## **The Vital Contributions of Mobile Alongsiders**

### **Paul and his team of mobile alongside included, among others:**

- **Timothy** (part Jewish from Lystra, Acts 16:1-3).
- **Titus** (a Greek from Antioch Gal 2:1-3).
- **Tychicus** (from the Province of Asia, Acts 20:4).

From Acts and the Epistles we see that these mobile alongside acted something like a “regional team” for the ministries in Asia, Macedonia, Achaia, Galatia, and Crete.

### **Examples of Timothy's contributions:**

- *We sent Timothy, who is our brother and God's fellow worker in spreading the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you in your faith.*(1 Thessalonians 3:2)
- *I sent [Timothy] to find out about your faith.* (1 Thessalonians 3:5)
- *I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you. I have no one else like him who takes a genuine interest in your welfare.* (Philippians 2:19-20)
- *As I urged you when I went into Macedonia, stay there in Ephesus so that you may command certain men not to teach false doctrines any longer.* (1 Timothy 1:3)
- *The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, "Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain," and "The worker deserves his wages." Do not entertain an accusation against an elder unless it is brought by two or three witnesses. Those who sin are to be rebuked publicly, so that the others may take warning.* (1 Timothy 5:17-20)
- *Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth ... Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share.* (1 Timothy 6:17-18)
- *Entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.* (2 Timothy 2:2)

### **Examples of Titus' contributions:**

- *The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you.* (Titus 1:5)
- *You must teach...teach...teach... In your teaching show integrity, seriousness and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed...These then are the things you should teach. Encourage and rebuke with all authority. Do not let anyone despise you.* (Titus 2:1-3,7-8,15)
- *Do everything you can to help Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way and see that they have everything they need. Our people must learn to devote themselves to doing what is good, in order that they may provide for daily necessities and not live unproductive lives.* (Titus 3:13-14)
- See also Titus' role in Corinth. (2 Corinthians 7:6-7; 2 Corinthians 8:6,16-17; 2 Corinthians 12:18)

### **Examples of Tychicus' contributions:**

- *Tychicus, the dear brother and faithful servant in the Lord, will tell you everything, so that you also may know how I am and what I am doing. I am sending him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are, and that he may encourage you.* (Ephesians 6:21-22)

- *Tychicus will tell you all the news about me. He is a dear brother, a faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord. I am sending him to you for the express purpose that you may know about our circumstances and that he may encourage your hearts.*  
(Colossians 4:7-8)

**A summary of some of the contributions we see being made by these mobile  
alongsiders:**

- Strengthen and encourage.
- Connect relationally and bring news.
- Assess progress.
- Complete what is left unfinished.
- Appoint and oversee local leaders.
- Teach and correct error.
- Teach giving and raise and administer finances.
- Lead with a generational mindset.

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